

Qatari minister offers to resign over budget cuts

DOHA (R) — Qatar's minister of municipal affairs and agriculture has offered to resign over cuts in his ministry's budget, a newspaper reported on Wednesday. "I have asked His Highness the Emir to relieve me of my duties because I cannot fulfil my obligations in view of the budgetary cuts for various projects at my ministry," the daily Al Watan quoted Minister Ali Said Al-Khiyareen as saying. Officials from the office of Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani declined to comment on the report.

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Meguid hospitalised after heart attack

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab League chief Esmat Abdel Meguid is in a Brussels hospital after suffering a heart attack, a senior league official said here Wednesday. "His health is improving and he is expected to return home to Cairo next Wednesday," said the official, who asked not to be named. Abdel Meguid, 75, was hospitalised Sunday after arriving in Brussels for a meeting with the Arab-Belgian Chamber of Commerce and talks with other officials, he said.

Albright hoping Middle East accord can be sealed at Washington summit

'Netanyahu, Arafat make significant progress towards W. Bank accord'

EREZ CHECKPOINT (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Wednesday that Israeli and Palestinian leaders had made "significant progress" toward a West Bank accord and hope to conclude it at a Washington summit next week.

"Basically, we have a lot to do," Albright said in occupied Jerusalem, as she prepared to fly to Brussels, Belgium, and then to London to grapple with the unrest in the Serbian province of Kosovo. The summit opens Oct. 15 and could last more than one day.

"I am very realistic about their having to make the hard decisions," Albright said of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who will be negotiating with the direct participation of President Bill Clinton at an undisclosed site in the Washington area.

"Their body language has been fairly positive," she said. "But you can't get away from the fact they do have to make the hard choices."

There were both symbolic and solid signs of progress after nearly two years of deadlock. Arafat invited Netanyahu to a lamb and fish lunch he hosted for Albright at a Palestinian guest house after the three-way talks. Netanyahu smoked a cigar after the meal, and later told Israeli the food Arafat served was kosher.

A senior U.S. official said, meanwhile, that the two sides agreed on the establishment of an industrial zone in Gaza in December and the formation of an anti-incite-

ment committee that would include educators and journalists. The aim is to deter provocative statements on both sides.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said CIA Director George Tenet met Tuesday with Israeli and Palestinian security officials. No details were provided, but the CIA for years has been assisting in the coordination of information about terrorism.

At a news conference, Albright said: "We are in a far better position to finalise all the issues" needed to conclude an agreement on the West Bank.

"The president is going to be very much involved in a lot of the detailed work," Albright said. "He has a very special and uncanny ability to work with people who have difficult problems like these. He puts himself in their shoes."

"I can say we climbed the foothills. We still have a very large mountain to scale in Washington," Netanyahu told reporters after returning to Jerusalem. If the Washington summit is successful, he said, he won't rule out beginning negotiations with Arafat at the summit on an overall settlement.

This would mean dealing with even more difficult issues than an Israeli pull-back on the West Bank. The Palestinians are insisting on a state and placing its capital in Jerusalem.

"Are the Palestinians ready to fulfil their commitments, to revoke the PLO Charter, to fight terror, to fulfil completely their part of the agreement under the principle of reciprocity?" Netanyahu asked. "If the



U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright shares a toast with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu smiles at a working luncheon on Wednesday in Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip. The meeting, which yielded agreement on the holding of a new Mideast peace summit in Washington starting Oct. 15, marked the first time an Israeli prime minister had entered a zone controlled by Arafat's Palestinian National Authority (AFP photo)

answer is yes, there will be an agreement. Period."

Said Arafat, "Until now, the Israeli side did not give any sign of approval for the American initiative, but in spite of that we are continuing our negotiations today."

In an exchange with reporters Wednesday in the Oval Office, Clinton said he was eager for the talks to start.

"It may take more than a day, yes," he said. "I asked them to black out a couple of days to come back because I think it's very important that we try to get over these last humps and get into the last

stage of negotiations."

"I'm prepared to invest as much time as it takes," he said, adding that he would stay closely involved. "I will be involved constantly throughout the process, yes," he said.

"I'm encouraged by the attitude and the sense of openness I felt from Prime Minister Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat the last time they were here," Clinton said. "And if they can come back here with that spirit, we're close enough now that we can get this done. And I just hope and pray that that will happen when they come back."

Albright praised the cooperation of Netanyahu and Arafat.

"This new spirit was very helpful and I hope very much that it will be carried on to Washington," she said. "I am very realistic that there are still hard decisions to be made."

Albright noted this was the first time that Netanyahu had ventured into Palestinian-held territory. "These two leaders here are putting their shoulders to the wheel," she said.

Turkish parliamentarians issue ultimatum to Syria

ANKARA (AP) — The Turkish parliament Wednesday issued an ultimatum to Syria, demanding Damascus eject Turkish Kurdish rebels from its territory or "face the consequences."

"Our wish is that the Syrian administration understands the seriousness of the situation, takes necessary measures and ends the presence of terror hideouts. If this is not done, it will unavoidably have to face the consequences," the 550-member parliament said in an announcement signed by all its nine parties.

Although it did not say what the consequences would be, the announcement raised the stakes in Turkey's face-off with Syria.

Earlier Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz accused Damascus of waging an indirect war against Turkey by supporting the rebels and told parliament the "time has come to end the dark games of Syria."

Syria denies sheltering rebels, and Turkey's harsh rhetoric has triggered fears of a regional conflict.

"We are not trying to spark a war," Yilmaz told Parliament.

"But we (the government) are determined if necessary to ask the parliament's consent for possible use of force."

Turkey has the second largest army in NATO after the United States. One of the most modern and best-equipped in the alliance, the battle-hardened 750,000-strong active duty force is double the size of Syria's.

Yilmaz said the cabinet decided earlier in the day to take all necessary dissuasive measures against Syria if it maintains its support to Kurdish rebels, fighting autonomy within Turkey.

"Through its support to the terrorists, Syria is waging an indirect war against Turkey," he said.

Yilmaz's address to parliament came a day after Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak held talks with Turkish President Suleyman Demirel in Ankara to seek a peaceful solution.

"Mubarak has inspired us to give a last chance to diplomacy," Yilmaz said. "The steps which Syria will be taking carry great importance in ending the tension."

Yilmaz said Ankara was demanding the extradition of the rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan to Turkey and an end to Syria's financial and logistics support.

Turkey also contends the rebels run training camps in the Syrian controlled-Bekaa Valley of Lebanon. Mubarak, who was given a dossier containing documents allegedly verifying Syria's backing for

Egypt: Efforts to defuse tension just beginning

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's mediation efforts to resolve the crisis between Turkey and Syria via diplomatic means are just beginning and much work remains to be done, Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Wednesday.

"The well-intentioned efforts of President (Hosni) Mubarak to defuse the crisis are only beginning. There is still a lot to do," Musa told a press conference here, adding that he was keeping in telephone contact with both Syrian and Turkish foreign ministers.

He insisted the standoff "can be managed through dialogue and diplomacy even though the situation is complicated."

"We are trying to avoid exacerbating tension between the two nations and we will take into consideration the complaints of the two parties," he said.

Musa also stressed the "importance of taking steps to instill trust between the two nations in order to bring about a dialogue between them."

Mubarak has been shuttling between Damascus and Ankara in an effort to prevent a war of words between the neighbours from escalating even further.

Musa said Mubarak's efforts at shuttle diplomacy "are supported by Arab nations. Mubarak speaks for all Arab countries."

"There is Arab consensus on two points. First, the problems that exist between Turkey and Syria do not require military action but rather immediate dialogue. Secondly, any military action would have serious repercussions throughout the region," he said.

Iraq parliament condemns 'threats against Syria'

BAGHDAD (AP) — The Iraqi parliament condemned Wednesday what it called Turkish threats against Syria and urged Arabs to rally to Syria's support, the official Iraqi News Agency reported.

"Turkish threats against Syria are part of the policy of power and disregard for the principles of international law pursued by the Turkish government toward Arab countries," INA quoted a source at the Iraqi parliament as saying.

"Any harm that would be done to any Arab country is targeted against the Arab Nation and the Turkish people at the same time, as well as against good neighbourly ties and joint interests between Turkey and the Arab Nation," INA said. The report was monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Baghdad on Sunday called on Turkey to withdraw the 10,000 troops it sent into northern Iraq to battle Kurdish rebels.

Turkish Kurdish rebels fighting for autonomy in southeastern Turkey carry out cross-border raids from camps in Iraq, Iran and Syria.

Northern Iraq is controlled by Iraqi Kurds who oppose the Baghdad regime.

the rebels, flew directly to Damascus from Ankara on Tuesday and met with Syrian President Hafez Assad for a second time in a week.

The United States and Russia, along with most countries of the Middle East, have urged the two countries to reach a peaceful settlement.

Yilmaz did not rule out direct talks with Damascus but said "even if there will be a diplomatic dialogue it must be limited to (discussing) the rebel activities alone."

Turkey and Syria are also at loggerheads over an ambitious Turkish irrigation project in southeastern Turkey, which Damascus fears would reduce the water flow of

Euphrates River crossing into Syria, and on the Turkish border province of Hatay which Ankara accuses Syria of having designs on.

Syria is also uneasy about the growing ties between Israel and Turkey.

Defence Minister Ismet Sezgin said Wednesday that a war with Syria would last only one day. Daily Yeniyyuzul said Turkey would stage pinpoint air raids on rebel camps if Syria does not change its attitude.

The Anatolia news agency reported Wednesday that some tanks and armed personnel carriers were transferred to the province of Sanliurfa bordering Syria.

Questions raised on French tests on Iraq arms

UNITED NATIONS (R) — A dispute has emerged among arms experts about whether a French laboratory found traces of the deadly nerve gas VX or a related substance on Iraqi warheads the United Nations wanted tested.

An American army laboratory at Aberdeen, Maryland in June discovered VX on warhead fragments, but Swiss labs found none, thereby bolstering Baghdad's contention that the U.S. results were faked to prolong searches for Baghdad's banned weapons. France was also sent swabs from the fragments. Its laboratory found traces of the deadly nerve gas VX or a related substance on Iraqi warheads the United Nations wanted tested.

The New York Times reported on Wednesday that the French laboratory appeared to have found traces of chemicals linked to VX but delayed releasing the final results while Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz was lobbying Security Council members this week to lift stringent economic sanctions. But French diplomats denied this, saying that the final results would be consistent with its earlier analyses that found no traces of dangerous chemicals.

Iraq: No agreement on ending standoff over arms inspections

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Iraq and the United Nations failed to reach an agreement on resuming spot searches of suspected weapons sites after 10 days of discussions, officials said Wednesday.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz told reporters after his fourth and final meeting with Secretary General Kofi Annan that he would take the U.N. proposals back to Baghdad for consultations and would report back to the U.N. chief.

"We are going to weigh the situation in its entirety in

Baghdad," Aziz said, adding that he needed clarifications on certain elements of the proposal. He planned to leave New York later Wednesday.

But neither side announced any breakthrough in the impasse that has prevented arms experts from looking for Iraq's weapons of mass destruction for over two months.

A statement issued by Annan's office said simply that "both sides agreed that the process of dialogue would continue."

The talks were intended to

persuade Iraq to reverse its decision Aug. 5 to stop cooperating with inspectors in return for a review conducted by the Security Council of its efforts to disarm itself.

The review could force the 15-member council to acknowledge Baghdad's progress over seven years of intrusive inspections while building support for an easing of sanctions that have crippled Iraq's economy.

U.N. weapons experts must certify that Iraq has destroyed its biological, chemical and nuclear weapons — and the long-

range missiles used to deliver them — before the council will lift sanctions imposed after Baghdad invaded Kuwait in 1990, touching off the Gulf war.

Iraq announced Aug. 5 it was ending cooperation with inspectors because the chief weapons inspector, Richard Butler, refused to certify that Iraq had destroyed its banned weapons.

Over four meetings during the Iraqi's visit, Annan briefed Aziz on his ideas of how the so-called "comprehensive review" might be carried out.

Property of Jordanians in Israel — a lingering issue

By Alia A. Toukan

AMMAN — Four years after the signing of Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, Jordanians still find it nearly impossible to reclaim any property they left behind in Palestine after fleeing the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

Some Jordanians, many of whom are of Palestinian origin and still possess land deeds and keys to their homes, had hoped that the 1994 peace treaty would guarantee the annulment of Israel's 1950 absentee property law, which placed their land and houses under Israeli jurisdiction.

But Israel's amendment of the law when it ratified the peace treaty in its Knesset in 1995, said that Jordanians can only claim property in Israel as of November

1994. Although individual Jordanians can now go through Israeli courts to have their property claims addressed, this remains a "mission impossible" as Israel has made it clear that it does not want to deal with this issue until final status negotiations, and specifically those over refugees begin.

Jordan's ambassador to Tel Aviv, Omar Rifai, announced last month he is lobbying to garner a majority in the Israeli Knesset to change the law. However, officials and observers remain sceptical that any motion will ever see the light of day.

But the recent move has led some to question why the Jewish state has not amended important legislation deemed to be "discriminatory" against Jordanian citizens

even after it signed a peace treaty with the Kingdom.

Israel's 1950 absentee property law states that land and homes left behind by Arabs as of 29 November 1947 are deemed "enemy" property, which were then "legally" confiscated by the concerned Israeli authorities.

Upon confiscation, the property fell under the ownership of the Israeli state, and were later sold or rented at the discretion of the authorities.

"The absentee property act is a prime example of discriminatory legislation in Israel," a former senior official told the Jordan Times.

Four clauses in the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty relate to the issue of the absentee property legislation:

— Article 11.1.b: "As soon as possible, and not later than three months from the exchange of the instruments of ratification of this treaty, to repeal all adverse or discriminatory references and expressions of hostility in their respective legislation."

— Article 11.1.d: "To ensure mutual enjoyment by each other's citizens of the process of law within their respective legal systems and before their courts."

— Article 24: "The parties agree to establish a commission for the mutual settlement of all financial claims."

— Article 26: "Within three months of the exchange of the instruments of ratification of this treaty the parties undertake to enact any legislation necessary in order to implement the treaty and

to terminate any international commitments and to repeal any legislation that is inconsistent with the treaty."

Jordan is using these four clauses to argue its case.

Officials told the Jordan Times that when the Kingdom signed the peace deal, it changed five articles in three months in its own legislation deemed to be discriminatory against Israel, in accordance with the requirements of the treaty.

Israel ratified its treaty in the Knesset, but simultaneously included the following articles in the ratification as amendments to the absentee law:

— Article 6.a: "In spite of the law of absentee property of 1950, and as of 10.11.1994, no property can be considered absentee

because its owner was a Jordanian national or present in Jordan after that date only."

— Article 6.b: "The procedures outlined in (a) does not change the status of property considered as absentee property by virtue of the law of 1950, prior to the date specified in paragraph (a) (10.11.1994)."

"What this basically means is the amendment is not retro-active, and the absentee law has not been annulled," said an official in the present government.

What's more, said a legal expert, the law of 1950, and the amendment, are "discriminatory" and run in contradiction to international law.

(Continued on page 2)

Shin Bet denies it had advance warning of Rabin assassination

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli secret service denied allegations Wednesday that an informer had given it advance warning of the plans of a Jewish extremist who killed Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995.

Hezi Kalo, an official of the Shin Bet domestic security agency, said the informer, Avishai Raviv, was unaware of the plot to assassinate Rabin even though he was close to the murderer, Yigal Amir.

"Our former agent, Avishai Raviv, was not let in on the secret assassination plans of Yigal Amir," Kalo said on Israel Radio.

Kalo said he was responsible for handling Raviv, a far-right activist drafted by Shin Bet to inform on his radical colleagues.

Amir shot and killed Rabin in November 1995 after an outdoor peace rally in Tel Aviv and is now serving a life prison sentence.

Amir said he killed Rabin to halt the government's policy of granting autonomy to Palestinians on territory in the West Bank which many Jews consider the biblical lands of Israel.

Since Rabin's assassination many questions have been raised about Raviv's role in inciting anti-government violence prior to the murder even while he worked for the Shin Bet.

Last week a government deputy minister, Michael Eitan, revived debate on the issue by demanding a formal probe into Raviv's actions and the possibility that he had provided his Shin Bet handlers with advance warning of Amir's plans to kill Rabin.

Speaking out for the first time in public, Kalo categorically denied the allegation and defended Shin Bet's relations with Raviv, who acted as an informer for eight years.

"He provided us hundreds of times with precious information about extremist circles which allowed us to prevent attacks on Palestinians, Muslim holy sites and leftist political personalities," he said.

"We couldn't do without Raviv's services," he said.

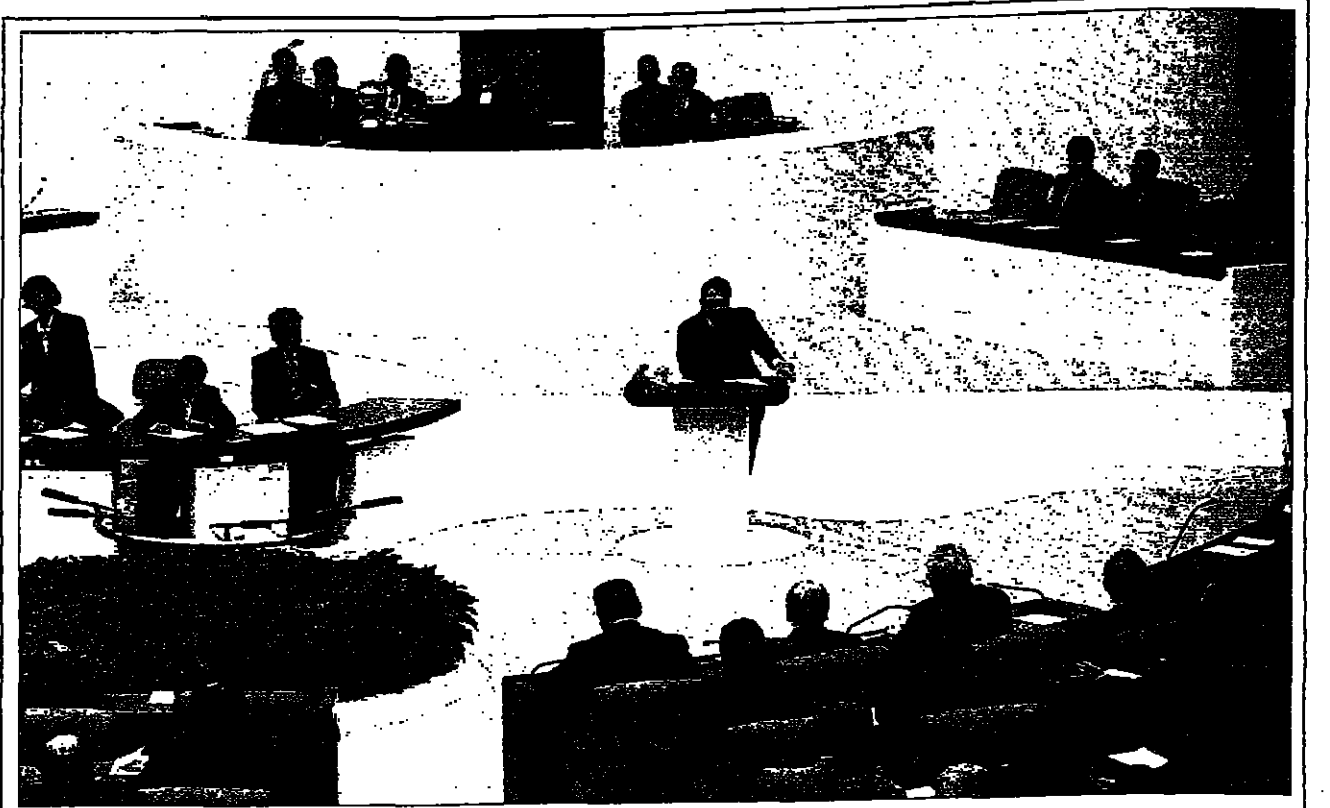
Asked during the interview about Raviv's role in organising violent anti-Arab demonstrations even when he worked for the Shin Bet, Kalo acknowledged that "this agent causes us some problems."

"But to be effective, an agent cannot be passive, he has to be involved in the activities of extremists and criminal groups," he said.

He added however that the Shin Bet "was not aware of all Raviv's activities, and if we had been, we would have intervened to calm him down."

The political right has seized on Raviv's activities to counter charges by the Labour Party that mainstream conservative politicians contributed to the violent anti-government atmosphere which led to Rabin's murder.

Labour leaders have notably accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was then head of the opposition, of inciting to violence during protests against Rabin's peace policies.



TURKISH PM SPEAKS AT PARLIAMENT: Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz addresses parliament Wednesday. Turkey is considering a request from mediator Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to seek a solution to a security crisis with Syria through diplomatic means, Yilmaz told parliament (Reuters photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess Sumaya attends tourism festival

JERASH (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Sumaya on Wednesday participated in the Jerash Tourism Festival, which was held on the occasion of World Tourism Day. Princess Sumaya toured archaeological sites and participated in a clean-up campaign in the Greco-Roman city organised by the governorate in cooperation with the Jerash education department and Jerash University. Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji briefed Princess Sumaya on the progress of work on the addition to the visitors' centre, in addition to current excavations and restoration work in the city. Biltaji stressed the need to link the Greco-Roman city with Jerash town to develop and promote tourism.

Court rejects civil servants' case

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Higher Court of Justice on Wednesday rejected a case filed by 82 civil servants contesting the legality of the new Civil Service Commission Law, which they claimed was undermining their rights and contravening the Constitution. Employees from the Greater Amman Municipality and other departments around the country filed the case on June 17, 1998, asking that the implementation of the law be prevented as "unconstitutional." The court was chaired by Suleiman Awajan and included Farah Rabadi, Mohammad Alawneh, Misbah Thiyab and Mahmoud Odeh.

Iranian reformists rejected

TEHRAN (AP) — Most reformists who applied to run for elections to an important caucus have been rejected by a hard-line council that vets candidates, according to their final list. Of the 396 people who had applied, 167 were approved to run for the Oct. 23 elections to the Assembly of Experts. Their names were published in Iranian newspapers Wednesday. The final list is evidence of the overriding clout of the hard-liners in Iran's clerical government where moderate President Mohammad Khatami and his small band of moderates are struggling to ease social and political restrictions. Among those eliminated by the hard-line guardian council were a number of advisers close to Khatami.

Study on Aqaba free zone completed

AMMAN (J.T.) — A group of 40 Jordanian economists Wednesday examined a feasibility study prepared by a consortium of international firms on transforming Aqaba into a Free Port and Special Economic Zone. The government last June signed an agreement with a consortium of American, Irish and Malaysian foreign consulting firms to prepare the \$1.2 million study, which was financed by the World Bank. Aqaba Region Authority President Mohammad Smadi, yesterday said Jordanian economists will study the feasibility study in three stages ending in December.

Medical officials say acupuncture 'specialists' violating law

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — Private sector doctors who are practising acupuncture are violating the Jordan Medical Board law, which does not acknowledge acupuncture as a speciality, officials said Wednesday.

Jordan Medical Board Secretary General Tawfiq Loubani said physicians practising acupuncture are violating the board's law and

should be banned from practising this technique.

"Acupuncture is not considered a speciality because it is not based on scientific grounds," Loubani told the Jordan Times in an interview.

Jordan Medical Association President Bassem Dajani, who echoed similar views, said acupuncture can be employed by anaesthetists but is not a speciality.

"An anaesthetist while specialising might have some courses in acupuncture, but it is not a speciality in itself. We are not against using acupuncture to ease pain, but doctors who write 'acupuncture' on billboards are violating the law because it indicates that they are specialists in the field," Dajani said.

Nasser Shoumali, an association member and head of a JMA committee which receives complaints, said that

while some doctors practice acupuncture to ease patients' pains, they can not declare themselves specialists in the field without having a certified university degree.

"Those who do not have a degree and declare themselves specialists in the field are violating the law because there is no speciality as such," he said.

"But at the same time, if a doctor has obtained a spe-

cialist degree in the field from a certified university, then the Jordan Medical Board must accredit the certificate," Shoumali added.

He said the board's decision was subjective because according to law, there are no articles prohibiting accreditation of certificates for specialists who obtained degrees from certified universities.

Abdul Mutaleb Tawil, an acupuncture practitioner for

18 years, also said the law has been subjectively applied, adding that other practitioners offer specialised services, such as laser treatment, but are not prevented from calling themselves specialists.

He suggested that an association be established for practitioners who offer acupuncture to avoid violating the law.

Property of Jordanians in Israel — a lingering issue

(Continued from page 1)

But most importantly, said Marwan Muasher, who was Jordan's first ambassador to Tel Aviv and is now serving as ambassador in Washington, "the Knesset law (on absentee property) is in direct contradiction with the peace treaty."

Legal experts said the interpretation of the law in the treaty means that Jordanians can buy and own property in the Jewish state as of November 1994. But if they intend to reclaim their land or homes lost prior to that date, they can only do so under the 1950 law, which still deems Arabs, of whatever nationality, as "enemies."

In August 1995, officials said, Jordan filed an official protest with Israel saying the Knesset law was in violation of the peace treaty. No acknowledgement was made.

From August 1996 till January 1997 the embassy in Tel Aviv continued pressing for a response, but to no avail, Muasher said.

In early 1997, when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held talks with His Majesty King Hussein in Amman, a Jordanian-Israeli delegation discussed a number of issues, one of which was the absentee property legislation.

When the Jordanians brought up the issue, Muasher said, the Israeli delegates claimed they had not heard of the Kingdom's letter of protest and "did not know anything about the issue."

Muasher said throughout his tenure as ambassador in Tel Aviv he tried to follow-up on the issue, but repeatedly hit a stone wall. He said he asked to meet with the "custodian" of the absentee properties, but couldn't and he enquired about the funds from the sale of Arab property, but did not get an answer.

"Nobody knows who the 'custodian' is, how much value the property is estimated at, and where the funds are," he said.

As the Israeli law currently stands, Jordanians

can only attempt to reclaim their property individually in Israeli courts invoking the 1950 law. The chances of regaining their homes and land are close to nil, as in most cases they have been sold.

Israel has maintained that this issue is not a bilateral one and must be left for final status negotiations when the question of refugees is set to be tackled.

"The property of Palestinian refugees is an issue that the (Jordanian-Israeli) peace treaty cannot fully resolve, as article 8.2 of the peace treaty clearly states," said the Israeli embassy spokesperson, Ro'ey Gilad.

"Article 8.2 states: 'Recognising that the above human problem caused by the conflict in the Middle East cannot be fully resolved on the bilateral level, the parties will seek to resolve them in appropriate forums, in accordance with international law, including the following:

a. in the case of displaced persons, in a quadripartite committee together with Egypt and the Palestinians;

b. in the cases of refugees:

i. in the framework of the work of the Multilateral Group on Refugees;

ii. in negotiations, in a framework to be agreed, bilateral or otherwise, in conjunction with and at the same time as the permanent status negotiations pertaining to the territories referred to in Article 3 of this treaty."

"The above mentioned article (8.2) is also mentioning the appropriate forums where the issue should be addressed," said Gilad.

But officials in Amman said that settling Jordanian citizens' financial and property claims is not a "refugee issue" and should not preempt discussion on the thorny problem. They said the rights of Jordanian citizens are separate from the rights of Palestinian refugees.

In any case, the officials said, Israel accepted this obligation under the peace

treaty.

Israel has also stated on numerous occasions that the question of Palestinian refugees will only be dealt with in tandem with Jewish refugees who fled Arab countries.

Officials in Amman contend that Jordan has nothing to do with the Jewish refugee issue since there were no Jews in Jordan and the peace treaty is a bilateral arrangement between Israel and the Kingdom.

An absentee property committee was set up in Jordan in early 1997, headed by former chief of intelligence and minister of interior, Raja'i Dajani, but is yet to be licensed. The last meeting held was in June 1997, said a member, adding that the committee did not want its work to overlap that of the government.

But observers say Jordan has avoided making an issue of what many would call a clear breach of the peace treaty.

"It is the fault of successive governments why this has not been rectified,"

said a former official.

The Kingdom attempted to engage in "quiet diplomacy" concerning the matter, according to an official. He also said Jordan has had other more pressing issues with Israel to deal with, such as the water problem.

As for setting up the claims commission as stipulated in the treaty, neither side has made any effort to implement it.

"According to an official, the Jewish state's reluctance to deal with the absentee property issue is 'absurd'."

"If Israel isn't willing to change the law after it has signed a peace treaty, then this throws into question its intention to ever change the status quo," he said.

He and others interviewed are sure that Israel will not annul the law. "I am convinced that the Israelis will not do it, it would mean they would have to give billions in settlement," said the official. "This will probably only be brought up in an eventual overall peace settlement."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

15:10 Cartoon — Superman
15:30 Drama — Sliders
16:00 Doc. Life on the Digital Edge
17:00 French Programme
18:15 Sliders — Sparks (Ep1)
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Science Magazine — L'oeuf De Colomb
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Family Matters
20:00 The Great Romances
20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn the Medicine Woman
21:10 Oprah Winfrey
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film — "Cadence"
23:59 Comedy — The Boys
00:30 End of T.X.

Friday Programmes

15:10 Animated Cartoon
15:30 Treasure Hunt
16:00 Feature film
18:15 The Simpsons
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme — Allo La Terre
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 Cinema, Cinema
20:30 Babylon-5
21:10 Destination Mars
22:00 News in English
22:30 The X-Files
23:10 The Halifax
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:12 Fajr

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

05:29 (Sunrise) Duha
11:23 Dhuhr
14:43 'Asr
17:17 Maghreb
18:34 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.
4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Abram Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Moderate weather conditions will prevail during the week-end with temperatures rising slightly. Clouds will appear at low altitudes and winds north-westerly to northeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman 16/29
Aqaba 22/34
Deserts 15/32
Jordan Valley 21/35

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 27, Aqaba 33
Humidity readings: Amman
39 per cent, Aqaba 50 per cent.

Following are the highest temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 25
Jerash 32
Um Qays 29
Madaba 29
Petra 31
Dead Seas 36

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Hanna Mansour 4750197
Dr. Afif Shukri 4898663
Dr. Khalil Ramadan 538723
Dr. Nidal Al Dabbab 5827195
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 4637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 4623672
Al Salam pharmacy 4636730
Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660
Najib pharmacy 5347632

Dr. Mahmoud Abul Hajja 279325
Al Quds pharmacy (---)
ZARQA:
Dr. Rafiq Atallah 994424
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Com-

plaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53300
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre Tel. 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akileh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 566727/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marica 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (---)
Zarqa National Hospital (---)
Zarqa National Hospital (---)

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:15 Sanaa (RJ)
08:45 New Delhi (RJ)
09:00 Bombay (RJ)
09:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:25 Beirut (RJ)
09:40 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:00 Colombo (RJ)
10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
14:55 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

16:30 London (RJ)
17:45 Kuwait (RJ)
18:10 Athens (RJ)
18:20 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
18:45 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
22:00 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
22:55 Larnaca (RJ)

Other Flights

07:55 Dubai (EK)
10:00 Kuwait (KU)
12:00 Riyadh (SV)
13:10 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
14:10 Sharjah (AH)
14:40 Doha (QR)
17:40 Beirut (ME)
18:00 Paris (AF)
19:25 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:00 Cairo (MS)
20:10 London (BA)
22:20 Istanbul (TK)
22:35 Larnaca (CY)
23:05 Moscow (SU)
00:15 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
03:20 Tunis (TU)
04:20 Antalya (TK)

Royal Wings (RW)

(For Thursday and Friday)
09:20 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Marka Airport) (RW)
17:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport on Thursday and Friday) (RW)
19:20 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA on Friday only) (RW)
21:35 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA on Thursday only) (RW)
22:25 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:45 Beirut (RJ)
10:35 Al 'Ain, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:20 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:45 Kuwait (RJ)
12:10 Paris (RJ)
12:20 Athens (RJ)
12:25 London (RJ)
19:35 Larnaca (RJ)
19:45 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
0:15 Cairo (RJ)
20:25 Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

05:15 Istanbul (TK)
06:50 Frankfurt (LH)
07:20 London (BA)
08:55 Dubai (EK)
08:55 Damascus, Dubai (RJ)
11:00 Kuwait (KU)
13:30 Riyadh (SV)
14:00 Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:00 Annabah, Algiers (AH)
15:30 Doha (QR)
19:00 Beirut (ME)
20:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:00 Cairo (MS)
00:30 Moscow (SU)
01:15 Amsterdam (KL)
04:20 Beirut, Tunis (TU)

Royal Wings

(For Thursday and Friday)
07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport on Thursday and Friday) (RW)
19:45 Tel Aviv (from QAIA—on Thursday only) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Tories struggle to mend fences over Europe

BOURNEMOUTH, England (R) — Leaders of Britain's Conservatives battled Wednesday to heal the bitter rifts over European policy which have dominated their party's annual conference this week.

But while foreign affairs spokesman Michael Howard offered an apparent olive branch to pro-European former ministers, rank-and-file delegates heaped insults on them.

In a debate on Europe at the conference in the southern English town of Bournemouth, they hissed their disapproval at the very mention of Sir Leon Brittan, a former Conservative cabinet minister now in charge of external trade issues in the European Commission.

And they enthusiastically cheered Theresa Villiers, a candidate for a seat in the European Parliament in next year's elections, who called the dissidents — led by former Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine and former Finance Minister Kenneth Clarke — "yesterday's men."

Party leader William Hague hoped he had lanced the boil which has poisoned the Conservatives for years by holding a membership

ballot on the issue of whether Britain should join Europe's single currency.

The ballot result announced Monday gave Hague 84 per cent backing for his policy of ruling out adopting the euro for the current parliament and the next one — at least eight years.

But Heseltine, Clarke and others have rejected the ballot as irrelevant, and insisted on their right to back the euro, provoking even pro-Conservative newspapers such as the Daily Telegraph to speak of intra-party "war."

Attempting to achieve a truce, Howard told the conference: "Of course we accept that those who voted 'no' in the ballot did so for honourable reasons. Of course it is an issue where people of goodwill can come to different conclusions."

"Let no one say that the 'no' voters are any less Conservative than the rest of us. Our party is composed of many strands. Unpick a single thread and the whole fabric is diminished," he added.

Howard was summing up a debate which began with a standing ovation for Eurosceptic former prime

minister Margaret Thatcher as she made her first appearance on the conference platform.

In the debate, several other delegates were much less gentle with the former ministers now so out of favour in the party.

Villiers conceded that they deserved respect for their past achievements.

But she added to a storm of applause: "Make no mistake — with the greatest respect to that past record — they are yesterday's men talking yesterday's politics." Another delegate, Roger Ison, urged the dissidents to "give William Hague the support and loyalty that you so rightly demanded when you were in office."

The only prominent pro-European to take part in the debate was Stephen Dorrell, one of the six men who contested the party leadership when Hague won it last year after a disastrous general election defeat put Labour in power.

Pleading for party peace, Dorrell said: "We have to spend less time telling the world what we disagree about and more time telling the world what we agree about."

Serious differences on human rights with China, says Blair

BEIJING (AFP) — "Serious differences" continue to exist between China and Britain on the issues of human rights and Tibet, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said here Wednesday.

"There is no disguising that we continue to have our serious concerns and differences about human rights — about political and religious freedoms and about the situation in Tibet, which I discussed at length with President Jiang Zemin today," Blair said at a British Chamber of Commerce dinner.

But he added that "on human rights, we can also move away from the sterile point-scoring of the past."

He said Britain had been able to engage the Chinese authorities and "I hope, to influence them."

"There is progress. I welcome China's growing involvement with the U.N. human rights system," Blair said.

He was referring to United Nations human rights commissioner Mary Robinson's visit to China last month and Beijing's signing of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Monday.

Blair's visit was marked by the brief detention of veteran Beijing dissident Xu Wenli early Wednesday.

Xu told AFP he was interrogated for several hours by police who said he must

stop calling for authorisation to set up a branch of the China Democracy Party (CDP).

Xu, a veteran of the 1979 Democracy Wall movement, has frequently been detained for brief periods by police since activists in seven provinces launched a campaign to legally register the CDP as China's first opposition party under the Communists.

Blair said that "when incidents like the questioning of a dissident this morning do occur, there is at least a process of dialogue in which they can be addressed and resolved. We can now discuss these with the Chinese authorities in a spirit of cooperation."



People walk past a large encyclopedia which is a part of the exhibition of the German publishing house 'Brockhaus' at the 50th Frankfurt book fair, the world's biggest, that runs from Oct. 7 until Oct. 11. The focal theme is the literature of Switzerland (Reuters photo)

Croats, environmentalists win alternative Nobels

STOCKHOLM (R) — Sweden's alternative Nobel prizes were awarded Wednesday to Croatian human rights activists and to groups promoting the environment while trying to reduce the influence of multinational corporations.

The 1998 Right Livelihood Awards prize was shared by two human rights workers, an international organisation promoting breastfeeding, a professor campaigning against cancer by tackling pollution and a Chilean group fighting dam building.

Two exceptional workers for peace in the war-torn Balkans will share the Right Livelihood Award with Chilean, American and international activists engaged in the global struggle to put limits on corporate power, the awards foundation said.

The \$230,000 award, announced annually before the official Nobel prizes, prides itself on its environmental slant. The foundation said Alfred Nobel's awards ignored much work and

knowledge vital for the future of humankind.

The Right Livelihood Award's founder, Swedish-German writer Jakob von Uexkull, set up the alternative Nobel prize after his suggestion to the Nobel Prize Committee to set up an environmental prize was snubbed.

Uexkull, a former member of the European Parliament who sold a stamp collection to fund the prize, said the prestige of the awards was on the rise every year but donations were shrinking.

One award was shared between Croatian physician Katarina Kruhova and Vesna Terselic and their organisations: the Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights in Osijek, and the Anti-War Campaign of Croatia, based in Zagreb for protecting human rights, supporting refugees and displaced persons.

Another prize was handed to the International Baby Food Action Network for campaigning for the rights of mothers to choose to breast-

feed their babies free from pressure from commercial companies who promote breastmilk substitutes.

It was best known for its part in the international boycott of Nestle for breaching World Health Organisation and the UNICEF codes for marketing breastmilk substitutes, the award said.

British-born Professor Samuel Epstein won his share of the award for campaigning against cancer by promoting the prevention of avoidable exposures to environmental carcinogens in air, water, food and the workplace.

The final winner was Chile's Juan Pablo Orrego and his organisation Grupo de Accion por el Biotio for their struggle to prevent ecological destruction of Chile's Biotio river valley which was threatened by a string of massive dams.

The awards are presented annually in Sweden's parliament in Stockholm on the day before the Nobel Prize presentations.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Overcrowded boat capsizes in Nigeria, at least 57 dead

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Rescue workers in northern Nigeria were pulling bodies from the Kaduna River Wednesday after a packed ferry capsized, drowning 57 people. It was unclear when or how the accident occurred, although local authorities said it was earlier this week. Twelve of those drowned were from the same family, the local Punch newspaper reported. Also, a number of the victims were children. Officials were still trying to determine the total number of people on board, a police officer said without giving his name. River ferries, old and often in complete disrepair, ply the inland waters of Nigeria typically overfilled with passengers.

Italian artist Bruno Munari dies

MILAN, Italy (AP) — Bruno Munari, an architect and artist who was a leading member of Italy's futurist movement, has died at 90. Munari had suffered from cancer for several years and died in his Milan home Sept. 29, Italian news agencies reported. After obtaining a degree in architecture, Munari began experimenting with a variety of materials and technology in his works. In 1948 he founded the Movimento Arte Concreta, known as the Macchiato movement. Munari's paintings, sculptures and mobiles are on display at galleries and museums throughout Europe. They include "Macchine Inutili" (Useless Works) and an album of 27 plates known as "Cantastoria Campari" (Campari Street Singer). Munari is survived by his wife Dilma and son Alberto.

Dead Sri Lankan soldier shows up after his funeral

COLOMBO (R) — A Sri Lankan soldier believed to have been killed by rebels last week turned up at his village soon after his own funeral, a newspaper said Wednesday. The Sinhalese-language Lankadeepa newspaper said Sarath Chandralal's family had completed his funeral last Sunday when they received a call from him telling them he was alive and returning to his Hingurana village in eastern Sri Lanka. Chandralal's wife and two children, who lived in central Warakapola town, were informed of his death and travelled to his native village to cremate his remains, the newspaper said. It said Chandralal had been granted leave just before the fighting erupted and had reached his wife's house in Warakapola, where he was told of his funeral in his native village. Some 1,000 people greeted Chandralal Monday when he reached his village, about 219 km east of the capital, Colombo. A banner — "May Sarath Chandralal, the brave soldier who sacrificed his life for his country, rest in peace" — hung along the road to his village, the newspaper added. Military officials were not available for comment.

Whale watchers look on horrified as killer whales attack baby humpback

BRISBANE, Australia (AP) — A boatload of tourists watched as two groups of killer whales hunted and killed a baby humpback whale off Australia's east coast Tuesday. The newspaper Courier Mail reported Wednesday that the group of whale watchers saw the killer whales, also known as orcas, separate a humpback calf from its mother and kill it as a pod of humpbacks passed North Stradbroke Island, in Queensland state, on their annual southern migration. Peter Hale, executive director of the Centre for Conservation Biology at the University of Queensland, said killer whales hunted all kinds of animals and that an attack on another whale species was not unusual. He said great white, or white pointer, sharks and orcas often followed migrating humpbacks from the cold waters near Antarctica north to the warmer waters off the Queensland coast during autumn and back again in the spring. Orcas usually single out the old, sick and very young humpbacks that are less able to take evasive action, Hale said. Last year, whale watchers at Byron Bay in northern New South Wales saw adult humpbacks being pursued by a pod of killer whales but the humpbacks escaped, he said. Last century, whalers with harpoons would kill humpbacks, and killer whales would close in and feast on the discarded humpbacks' lips and tongues. Hale said he could not recall the killing of a humpback by killer whales actually being witnessed. "It just happened to occur during the day in calm weather where people could see it off Point Lookout on North Stradbroke Island," he said.

Season's hottest costumes inspired by Washington scandal

BOSTON (AP) — Forget the witches' brooms, clown noses and monster masks. This year's most popular Halloween costume calls for a blue dress, a beret and, yes, a cigar. "We thought Titanic costumes would be the big rentals, but it looks like Bill and Monica are winning the race," said Stephen LaLiberte, rental manager at Boston Costume. As impeachment hearings move forward in Washington, stores around the country are fielding requests for costumes of President Bill Clinton, Monica Lewinsky and even Linda Tripp. "We're getting lots of requests," said Claire Olerich, owner of the Costume Gallery in Derry, New Hampshire, noting customers are disappointed when they can't find masks bearing Lewinsky's likeness. For the creative reveller, dressing up as a figure from the political sex scandal is easy, especially with the details provided in Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's report and from Clinton's grand jury testimony, broadcast nationally last month. There are wigs to match some of Lewinsky's oft-changing hairstyles. There are dark-hued berets like the ones she wore in those brief meetings with Clinton, captured on videotape, in meet-and-greet receiving lines. And there are the cigars, inspired by Starr's allegation that in one encounter, an unlit cigar was used as a sexual prop. "People even want the tie," said Marilyn Wick, owner of the Fort-Lauderdale, Florida-based chain Costume World, referring to one of the gifts the former White House intern gave the president.

Reputed Lincoln portrait fails to sell

NEW YORK (AP) — The portrait shows a lanky, clean-shaven young man in his Sunday best. But was it a young Abraham Lincoln? Buyers didn't think so, and the 1843 daguerreotype that some say is one of the earliest known images of Abraham Lincoln failed to sell at an auction Tuesday.

"It's a fitting ending and just closure to the piece," dealer and daguerreotype collector William L. Schaeffer said.

"Probably fewer than 1 per cent of any collectors or experts ever believed it was a Lincoln." The daguerreotype, titled "Portrait of a Gentleman. Believed to be Abraham Lincoln," was taken off the Christie's auction block after it failed to make the minimum bid. The minimum was not disclosed, but the high bid was \$150,000. Christie's had estimated it would sell for at least \$200,000.

Schaeffer said that if the picture was really of Lincoln, it would be worth \$3 million to \$5 million, but no one was willing to take the gamble.

The 9-by-7.5-cm daguerreotype, a mirror-image photograph produced on silver or copper, had been the subject of heated dispute since it surfaced in 1992.

Some historians said Lincoln could have posed for the picture while serving in the Illinois House of Representatives, when he would have been 33 or 34. But doubters said it simply does not look like the future president.

The features of the man in the picture are vastly different from Lincoln's, they said, pointing to the ears, nose, shoulders and eyes. Some went so far as to compare the veins in the hands, claiming they do not match a cast of Lincoln's hands made in 1860.

Doubters were not swayed when a computer programme used to identify what missing children may look like years later supposedly matched the daguerreotype with three Lincoln portraits.

The daguerreotype's owners, collectors Robert and Joan Hoffman, bought the picture in 1992 for an undisclosed amount from a New York antiques dealer. The dealer who sold it to the Hoffmans got it from the Hay-Wadsworth family, whose ancestor John Milton Hay was Lincoln's assistant secretary.

That did not matter to Paul Hertzmann, a California dealer.

"It didn't sell because it wasn't a Lincoln," he said.

Paris train, bus-drivers strike for better safety

PARIS (AFP) — Strikes by Paris train and bus drivers demanding better safety after attacks on drivers disrupted public transport in and around the French capital for the second day Wednesday.

Around half the city's 3,000 buses were back on the roads after an almost total halt in bus services Tuesday due to a strike called after a youngster stabbed a driver who had refused to drive his vehicle between two regular stops.

Drivers' trade unions demanding more staff on sensitive routes and night buses were holding talks to decide whether to continue

the stop-work protest.

Meanwhile, rail traffic from Paris' southern Montparnasse station to western suburbs and towns such as Versailles-Chantier, Rambouillet and Chartres ground to a total halt when drivers walked off the job following an attack Tuesday against a driver.

Train services covering the capital's eastern suburbs also halted from the Gare de l'Est after drivers struck in solidarity. "We are not going to wait until we are attacked in our turn before entering the dispute," said one union delegate.

Anger over security on the RER commuter fast rail link

between Paris and the suburbs also caused a strike and a 50 per cent cut in traffic on the C-line.

And traffic on the southern portion of the RER D-line between the Gare de Lyon railway station and the southern suburbs of Melun, Corbeil and Malesherbes was halted for the second day and reduced on the northern portion of the D-line commuter rail service, also because of an attack against a driver.

The interior ministry, which ordered in 200 extra police to the 400 already assigned to public rail and road transport in Paris, said there was an eight per cent

increase in attacks on public transport in the first 10 months of 1997.

Last week, rail traffic from Paris' Saint-Lazare station into the western suburbs was disrupted three days running after a hold-up in a suburban station.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Lionel Jospin summoned Transport and acting Interior Ministers Jean-Claude Gaysot and Jean-Jack Queyranne to a meeting Wednesday afternoon to discuss security in the Paris transport system.

Representatives of the French railway and Paris Metro companies were also invited to attend.

Malaysia's Mahathir rejects call for early polls

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad dismissed calls Wednesday for snap polls to test his strength following the much-publicised sacking of his deputy Anwar Ibrahim and economic problems facing the country.

He said the government was firmly in control of the political situation as its two-third majority in parliament was unshaken and there had been no defections from his United Malays National Organisation (Umno) or junior parties in the ruling coalition.

Furthermore, he said,

holding an election was a "very big job" and valuable resources could not be diverted now from the massive task of ejecting the economy out of recession.

"Recent problems have not resulted in any major defection within the party and government. My assessment is that the people still support the government," Mahathir said in reply to a question at a national economic recovery forum.

"This means that we will not hold elections, not for sometime yet," he said.

Mahathir's Umno is the dominant party in the ruling National Front coalition,

which won a landslide victory in the last general elections in 1995. Polls are not due until the second quarter of 2000.

Mahathir sacked Anwar, who was also finance minister, on Sept. 2.

Anwar was detained 18 days later under the draconian Internal Security Act (ISA), allowing for indefinite detention without trial, after he led a mass rally against Mahathir, calling for his former mentor to step down.

Anwar, whose arrest led to further anti-government demonstrations, has since pleaded not guilty to 10 charges of sodomy and cor-

ruption.

Ten Umno members were expelled for being linked to an anti-Umno movement Wednesday while 18 others, including the head of the party's powerful youth wing, have been asked to explain why they should not be expelled.

Mahathir said they comprised only a small number compared to the 2.4 million party members nationwide. He said that unlike in 1987, when he nearly lost in party polls and there was a "substantial shift" of support away from the government, "I notice there has been no exodus from the party" at present.

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Avoid regional conflict

ALL THAT Ankara seems to want from Damascus in order to restore friendly relations is for Syria to stop hosting the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) leadership and close alleged training bases. The Turkish ambassador to Jordan, Suha Umar, clearly spelled out the official position of his government when he said that all that his country seeks is to have Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan expelled from Syrian territory and an end to all forms of support for the PKK. Syria denies the allegation that Kurdish leader is residing in Syria. It should be relatively easy to determine the whereabouts of Ocalan if the tension between the two neighbouring countries rests solely on this issue. If there is a lot more to the tension than meets the eye, then simply redressing the declared Turkish grievances would not rectify the standoff.

To be sure, there is still a school of thought which claims that the strategic alliance between Israel and Turkey may have something to do with Turkey flexing its muscles. Nothing would please Israel more than to have Turkey settle few scores with Syria on its behalf. Syria is viewed as waging a proxy war in southern Lebanon which has proved to be too painful for the Israeli government. Syria and Israel have yet to resume peace negotiations. There is little doubt that an Israeli-Turkish axis has rendered Syria more vulnerable to Israeli dictates. That is why Syria should not let itself be dragged to an armed conflict that will have dire consequences not only for itself but for the region as a whole. Neither Syria nor any of its neighbours, save Israel, have an interest in a new hot spot added to the many boiling points in the region.

If war does indeed break out between Turkey and Syria, there is no way that such a military conflict could be quickly arrested. The first casualty could be Turkish-Arab relations. Turkey is a secular state where religion is not allowed to play a pivotal role in determining the course of its policies towards the rest of the Muslim World. The long-term prognosis is indeed alarming should Turkey and the Arab World come to loggerheads over key regional issues, especially water, security and stability. That is why the Turkish-Syrian crisis needs to be contained before it gets worse. What is called for then is high statesmanship and long-term vision. The way to go about these objectives is to hold a summit of all Middle Eastern leaders as soon as possible including, of course, those of Syria and Turkey.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Faded Fanek discussed the reasons behind the 4.5 per cent drop in Jordan's imports during the past seven months. The price reduction of imported Iraqi raw oil and the drop in price of imported vegetable oils are among these reasons, he said. The decision to raise local pharmaceuticals prices decreased the differences between local and foreign pharmaceuticals, which caused a 13 per cent diversion of local demand to imports, the writer added. These factors and others improved the local trade balance and reduced shortage. However, there was a five per cent drop in imported machinery, which, according to Fanek, indicates that investment is slowing.

Al Ra'i's Tareq Masarwah asked whether the water coming from the Zai Water Treatment Plant is potable? He urged the government to publish official laboratory reports to calm people down, win their trust and end the controversy between the government and the Parliament over the issue. The new government has to agree, said the writer, that the former government's actions towards such issues harmed its credibility and adversely affected Jordanians. Masarwah said water matters are sacred and should not be a matter of debate, because water is a basic need. He urged the new government to be more transparent and credible than the last government in order to restore the nation's trust.

View from Academia

The messy Middle-Eastern malaise

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

WHETHER THE current unfortunate tension between Syria and Turkey escalates into military action (a limited one, in the opinion of many experts) or whether the crisis gets defused somehow, the fact (a sad one indeed) remains that the whole Middle East region has been, is, and will for a long time continue to be (unless and until a striking act of courage or common sense on part of leaderships in the region) in bad, volatile shape.

Relations among countries in our part of the globe have never been, and are not at this point, in the least satisfactory, let alone good, positive, or effective. Even during the sporadic periods which we refer to as normal (i.e. in the absence of war, tension and violence), they are anything but normal. Most countries are at best lukewarm toward each other, and they pay lip-service to the rosy slogans of unity, solidarity, integration, complementarity, cooperation, co-ordination, fraternity, neighbourliness, etc. Many are not even on speaking terms with each other.

The Middle East — with the peace process at a nasty halt, with the various tensions (now overt, now covert) among its various countries still deeply rooted, with so many disputes and problems still unresolved, with the existence in it of those who believe in war and military superiority as an effective means of survival and self-assertion, and with the presence of nuclear weapons — is in fact a very dangerous place.

One of the most distressing facts about the Middle East situation today, however, is that the region, unlike many others in today's world, has not progressed much over this whole century, which is fast coming to an end. We still live with the same old mentalities that have plagued us for so long, we still adopt the same outmoded approaches that have failed us so many times, and we still cherish the same unrealistic and false dreams. The Middle East

region is not only hopelessly factionalised and deeply at odds with itself, but it has not evolved much, despite the minimal/disparate improvements here and there. Our archaicism or obsolescence is a real problem.

But the Middle East is also parasitic. For its sustenance and survival it looks away from itself to others. Rather than rely on itself and realise its own potential, it follows in the steps of others. Rather than dig into the so many mines and treasures with which it has been blessed, it begs meagre, petty handouts from others. The Middle East is wealthy and privileged: in its oil, water, mineral and human resources; in its geographic location and demographic wealth; in its cultural and historic legacies, etc. The great tragedy is that the region's tremendous potential is not realised, the efforts are not well coordinated and the resources and privileges are not put to good use. This is why the region looks poor and insignificant, despite its so many vital resources and privileges.

And the Middle East is adolescent and unsophisticated. Until now, we have not learnt to sit down and address our differences, disputes and problems in a mature, civilised manner. Real dialogue is absent, and unless someone from outside the region intervenes (even this at times does not work), we cannot resolve our differences.

The Middle East is also selfish and short-sighted, with each country looking after its own individual interest, forgetting that the interest of the one is part and parcel of the interest of all.

What I am saying is that the real tragedy of today's Middle East lies not in the fact that there are differences and crises between this and that country in it, but that such crises and differences are the direct result of a collective unhealthy political, cultural, sociological and psychological condition, a condition for which the Middle Eastern

countries themselves are primarily to blame.

The world has changed. The more enlightened parts of it have learnt not only to overcome differences and to transcend petty individual inhibitions, but also to make use of resources and to coordinate efforts effectively. We in the Middle East need to do the same, and we can.

Western Europe is a great example. There was a time (not long ago) when the Western European countries were at odds with themselves, when they were also tragically factionalised, and when they acted destructively. But in the past couple of decades especially, they have learned to repress and control their prejudices and to channel their mutual efforts and coordinate their resources to the benefit of all.

The peoples of the Middle East have the right to a better life, just like the peoples of Western Europe have. They want, first, safety and security, not for one nation or state but for all. They reject hegemony and superiority (military, nuclear, etc.). They want cessation of hostilities of all kinds, for stability and security are prerequisite for a healthy and prosperous life. But, they also want development, progress, and prosperity.

This will not happen until the Middle Eastern region begins to think of itself as a region, as a unit. And it will not happen unless it takes seriously not only dialogue to cease border hostilities and overt tensions but also dialogue to root out the inner bickering, jealousy, and covert hostilities. Above all, however, it will not happen unless its states learn to sit down and plan for an overall future, one based on the principles of mutual respect, mutual interest, and mutual destiny; of sharing, coordinating, living and letting live; and planning for the benefit of the region as a whole.

Jerusalem life

Daoud Kuttab

Look at the fingers not the tears

THE MEDIA, whether Arab, Israeli or foreign has been busy covering the visit of the U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the region. But the frenzy of the media has not been matched by a similar interest by the people of the area. The level of apathy and scepticism of Palestinians today is perhaps unmatched in any other period since the peace process began. Despite the possibility of a breakthrough, political activists, as well as average Palestinians are paying little attention to the recent political discussions.

Ghassan Khatib, director of the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre explains to me that this apathy is very natural considering all the disappointments Palestinians have experienced. Politicians know that if any compromise will be made it will be made in Washington and not in the region. Khatib states that average Palestinians are ahead of the politicians in their prediction that with the present Israeli government no change will take place. Whether it is 13 per cent or 10 per cent, Palestinians feel that such talk is way below their minimum expectations. Even the most optimistic have lost hope in even seeing movement on that small scale.

Recalling the story of the birds looking at the hunter with frost induced tears in his eyes, Khatib repeated what one bird told the other bird, "Don't look at their tear-filled eyes, look at their fingers on the trigger."

The source of Palestinian scepticism today is not only based on an emotionless political analysis. All a Palestinian has to do is try to travel from one location to another and the anti-peace real-

ity of the Israeli government hits him or her in the face. At a time of proven PNA actions against armed Islamic militants, the Israeli security forces continue to revert to unproven travel restriction measures affecting the entire Palestinian population. A triple closure has been in effect while Madeleine Albright has been travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho to the Beit Hanoun junction near Gaza. The regular closure in effect since March 1993 has barred entry of Palestinians into Jerusalem and Israel without permits. Since September 10, and after Israel assassinated two Hamas activists, Palestinians with travel permits were forbidden entry.

We were told that this closure was a short-term precautionary act. This closure affected Palestinians who work in Israel as well as business people, doctors and journalists. About a week later the closure was slightly relaxed. For humanitarian reasons, we were told, doctors were allowed to get special permits. Journalists — accredited journalists — and a few thousand workers were allowed into Israel. Last week this easing of the closure was reversed. Citing intelligence reports of threats of violence, the closure was tightened again. The new policy extended the closure to the few business people, doctors and workers who had been allowed to move around. Now we are told that the 2.5 million Palestinians will not be allowed to move into Jerusalem and Israel or between Gaza and the West Bank until after the 13th of October when the Jewish Sukkot holidays will be over. Of course during this entire period, this apartheid-like closure order has not affected the

Jewish settlers who live in the Palestinian areas. Their movement has never been affected even when a location like downtown Hebron was under curfew after the recent violence in the city.

This Palestinian apathy, will make the work of leaders much more difficult. The fear is that if a future agreement fails to affect the lives of Palestinians on a day-to-day basis, few will give it the support it needs. If prisoners are not released, safe passage ways opened, if settlements and land confiscations don't stop and the economy doesn't improve, then how can Palestinians believe in the peace process.

Until recently Palestinians were generally supportive of the peace process in the knowledge that even with the ups and downs that go with negotiations, the general direction the process was taking was to their liking.

This attitude has changed. No longer do average Palestinians feel that the process is going in the right direction. Through this growing apathy more Palestinians are indicating their lack of faith in the process as a whole. And for these people, it is no longer important whether the Israeli pullback is 10 or 13 per cent or whether President Clinton can muster a breakthrough.

Albright is right about the importance of time. As time goes by without major tangible progress in the peace process, short-term breakthroughs will not be enough to turn Palestinian sceptics of the peace process into believers in it. Sustained, tangible and sincere efforts are needed to make the Palestinian majority believe that peace is at hand.

LETTERS

A sound apology

To the editor:

I WOULD like to commend the government, especially the information and interior ministers, for the public apology they offered Monday for any mistreatment of foreign workers by individual security personnel during the roundups of workers last week. Their apology was an act of significant political and national dignity, self-confidence, maturity, humility, and responsibility — precisely the character traits and political values that we expect from our government and that have always defined the best aspects of Jordan and Jordanians. It is not easy for officials and governments to make such apologies; it takes great courage to do so, and our government should be commended for having the courage and honesty to act in this way. Equally important, I hope that steps are taken to make sure that the initial unfortunate incidents of mistreatment do not happen again.

Rami G. Khouri,
 Amman.

Punish honour crimes

To the editor:

I CONTINUE to be shocked by reports about honour killings in Jordan. The last case I read about particularly worried me, because one of the women was raped and did not engage in sexual intercourse freely. While I understand that according to Islamic law premarital sex on the part of a woman is punishable by death, I believe that being raped precludes a woman from this law. Leniency granted by the judicial authorities for the murderer in this particular case is wrong. For the woman to have gone to the authorities, requested police protection, been released on the guarantee of safety by the police and then to have been murdered upon her return home while not punishing her murderer places our police force in a bad light. To restore its credibility harsher sentences should be imposed for these crimes.

Yasar Atiyeh,
 Amman.

Riad Al Khouri

Developing world

The European connection

FROM BEIRUT — Living and working in Lebanon has always provided me with interesting contrasts to the rest of the region. Lebanon is in fact much closer to Europe in its culture than is the rest of the Arab Mashreq.

Things like Saturday-Sunday weekends and going off summer time along with European Union countries in late October remind you that in many things the Lebanese look West.

This also includes business. Lebanon continues to rely heavily on the EU for the lion's share of its imports. These were close to half of total Lebanese imports in 1997, with Italy (providing 13 per cent of Lebanon's imports) and France (10 per cent) being Lebanon's largest suppliers. The picture for Lebanese exports is somewhat different: the EU only buys about a fifth of these, with the French (taking seven per cent of Lebanese exports in 1997) and the Italians (three per cent) trailing Lebanon's top two customers, Saudi Arabia (15 per cent) and the UAE (nine per cent). If we also keep in mind that Syria (six per cent) buys double the Lebanese goods that go to the U.K. — the third largest EU buyer from Lebanon — and that even Kuwait (five per cent) and Jordan (four per cent) outstrip Britain as customers, we can see that Lebanon also looks to the Middle East region for business. In fact, the Arab World takes almost half of Lebanon's exports, and adding on other regional economies brings this to over 52 per cent.

However, this kind of comparison is somewhat misleading if we don't remember that Lebanon's merchandise exports are equal to only nine per cent of its imports. In other words the EU's half of Lebanon's imports is over ten times the value of the Arab half of the country's exports. Not that this negates Lebanon's strong economic links with the Arab World, which covers part of the country's merchandise trade deficit by heavy purchases of services such as Lebanese tourism etc. Nevertheless, the European connection remains vital to Lebanon, and this will be strengthened with the eventual signing of an EU-Lebanese association agreement in the Euro-Med framework. Such accords have already been finalised with Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan; and negotiations are proceeding with Syria and Egypt. The interesting question is, if Lebanon is so close to Europe, business-wise and otherwise, shouldn't it have been one of the first of the twelve Mediterranean economies to sign a Euro-Med accord? Although this might possibly have been true in the 1960s or early 70s (had a Euro-Med process existed then) when Lebanon's links with the West were far more developed than those of other Arab Mashreq economies, the Lebanese civil war years of 1975-91 have changed this picture. Today, Lebanon's unique pre-1975 position as a major platform for cultural and technology transfer from west to east and business link between the Mashreq and Europe has been bypassed by Syrians, Jordanians and other Arabs strengthening their own

direct connection with the West. At the same time, Lebanon has slipped in some things, including the efficiency of its economic administration. This has been especially true of Lebanese customs, an area where a lot needs to be sorted out before the pace of EU-Lebanese partnership negotiations can be accelerated. This will require serious reforms in light of the Euro-Med agreement.

The customs administration plays a crucial role in the Lebanese economy. In fact, customs is the largest source of state revenues, at around 44 per cent. Customs behaviour helps to determine the efficiency of Lebanon's transit, import and export trade, thus affecting the country's competitiveness.

The Lebanese government has regained control over customs after their domination by militias in 1975-91, and a lot has been done since to improve the situation, during the past two years or so in particular. As of September 1997, a new system has reduced the number of steps in customs clearance from thirteen to four. According to the new procedures, it only takes up to five days for goods to be released from customs. In fact, ten per cent of goods now go through customs with no inspection at all, reducing the number of steps from four to three.

These goods follow a "green line." Other imports goods go through a "red line," where up to 100 per cent of any consignment can be physically inspected.

Since 1995, other reforms undertaken have included concentration of tariff rates from 75 to 12 brackets, consolida-

tion of categories of imports from 5,000 to 1,700, and consolidation of tariff and other fees into one.

Nevertheless, further reforms of the laws and official requirements need to be addressed. For example, customs officials earn low salaries, and incentives and compensations are rarely linked to effort and productivity. In other words, the salary scale is hardly a deterrent to bribes. Moreover, political patronage has reduced the formal merit system hence resulting in rent-seeking activities. Allowing corruption to compensate for low wages breeds inefficiency. Unfortunately, with a large budget deficit and high debts, the Lebanese government has no financial resources to improve the salary scale. Hence, the current policy implies that the government has opted for a low-wage-bill-with-high-corruption equilibrium.

Which brings us back to relations with Europe: until many issues in Lebanon's customs regime and fiscal system in general are sorted out, further serious negotiations with the EU are going to be tricky. The more these changes are delayed, the more Lebanon will slip behind the rest of the region. The pre-1975 days when Lebanon was touted as the Switzerland of the Middle East are long gone. The Lebanese nevertheless still have a lot going for them, particularly regarding their rapport with Europe, but a tremendous amount needs to be done to preserve this connection and build on it.

ay, October 8-9, 1998
nad Y. Majdoub
alaise

Society on the move

Promotions, celebrations and all that jazz

MISSED BIO: Last week's appointment of Malek A. Kabariti as head of the National Centre for Energy Research at the Higher Council for Science and Technology told us little about this young engineer. So here it is. U.S.-educated Kabariti, 44, obtained his B.Sc. from the University of Texas at Arlington and an M.Sc. from the University at Morgantown in West Virginia. Both degrees were in mechanical engineering. Kabariti's professional career began in 1977 as a research assistant at the Royal Scientific Society's Renewable Energy Research Centre. He was gradually promoted and from 1995 until his appointment to the HCST he was director of the centre. It has been an RSS policy to encourage promotions from within first. Kabariti specialises in research and development, solar energy, and the heating and cooling field.

NATIONAL DAYS: The German community in Jordan celebrated the anniversary of their country's unification early last week, with some guests still celebrating the recent win of Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder as the new chancellor. Ambassador Peter Mendel and his wife Margaret hosted a reception at the Radisson SAS Hotel offering up typical German fare including schnapps and German sparkling wine. There to congratulate the Mendes were Minister of Public Works and Transport Nasser Lawzi, former minister of water Munther Haddadin and former planning minister Rima Khalaf. Haddadin said he was heading to one of the U.S.'s Ivy League universities to give a lecture on water diplomacy. ALSO CELEBRATING a national day anniversary were South Korean Ambassador Lee Kyung Woo and his wife at their residence. Again the guest list included senior officials

and counterparts and friends from the diplomatic community.

COMMUNICATING: With the academic year back in full swing, the Institute of Diplomacy, in cooperation with the Dublin-based MacBride Roundtable on Communication and the Med-Media Jonstone Network here in Amman, is organising a roundtable on "Culture and Communication: A Global Information Society." The November 23-25 event will bring together communications academics and practitioners to address the challenges and opportunities brought about by the rapid developments in global communication technology, while focusing on the future. Coordinating the themes and papers to be presented are ID President Dr. Kamel Abu Jaber, MacBride Secretary General Sean O'Siochru, and Med Media Director Tudor Lomas. The keynote speaker will be HRH Crown Prince Hassan.

VISITING DANES: Visiting Jordan this week are 49 members of the Foreign Policy Society of Copenhagen. Arriving today in Amman via the ferry from Egypt, the group, led by society director Klaus Carsten Pedersen, is expected to be received during their stay by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, at the Royal Court. Due into Amman for the occasion of the visit is Lars Blinkenberg, non-resident Ambassador of Denmark residing in Syria. The group will visit the Institute of Diplomacy and meet with several political figures. On Saturday Honorary Consul General for Denmark in Jordan, Tanfij Kassar will host a reception at the Radisson for the group, which includes former Danish ministers, retired government and

army personnel, doctors, lawyers, university professors, writers and journalists. Kassar has invited many Jordanians who will have an opportunity to meet many of their Danish counterparts. State visits to Denmark by their



Ted & Barbara DeJournette

Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor (April 1998) and Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarayth (June 1998) have enhanced bilateral relations. Prince Hassan delivered the keynote address to the 7th International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan sponsored by

the University of Copenhagen and attended by Queen Margrethe II. He also addressed the Foreign Policy Society, whose honorary president is Crown Prince Frederik. Besides their meetings, the visiting group will tour Petra and Jerash. Their visit ends on Oct. 11, just ahead of a visit to Jordan by the Danish Armed Forces chief of staff.

MISSION AT HAND: Around 80 Rotary Club members from all over Israel are in Jordan on a humanitarian visit. The group includes Israeli Arab Rotarians: four couples from Marur, three from Rama, one from Haifa and one from Nazareth. This is not the first visit of Rotarians to Jordan; a few years ago the Inner Wheel, which is the women's branch, visited, and there was a visit from the Nazareth branch as well. On Tuesday evening, the Rotarians gathered for a dinner attended by HRH Prince Ra'ad Ben Zeid and some public figures. There were a few tense moments when a controversial deputy was reported to have given a few Jewish members of the group a lecture about the policies of their prime minister. According to the offended party, the Rotarians' mission is humanitarian and steers clear of politics. Today the group is to meet Jordanian Rotarians. Perhaps that encounter will go more smoothly.

TURNING GREEN: There's news of another honorary consul — businessman Ghassan Talhouni — who represents the Democratic Republic of Congo in Jordan. Talhouni dons another hat with his appointment last week as environment advisor to the Amman Municipality. His plan is to open a public suggestion box to encourage citizen

involvement in keeping their city clean. So start those letters coming.

SADDLE UP: In Jordan to compete for the Horse Endurance Race sponsored by Emirates Airlines are UAE Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and his sons Sheikh Hamdan, Maktoum and Rashid Ahmad Ben Humaid Al Nuwaimi, the son of the Emir of Ajman. The event will start tomorrow (Friday) at 6:00 a.m. in Wadi Rum. The race is being held under the patronage of HRH Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein, president of the Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation. Around 113 participants from nine countries, plus observers, referees and veterinarians will be part of this all day event expected to end at 8:00 p.m.

SO LONG: Anyone who became hooked to Jordan Radio's Jazz Inflight programme will be sad to learn that show hosts Ted and Barbara DeJournette have returned to Washington. Barbara, who had an already full load of work as U.S. Information Service administrative officer at the embassy in Amman, will become responsible for personnel for foreign national employees in U.S. diplomatic missions in the Near East. The couple's radio programme — a soothing respite both in presentation and musical selection — was aired for about a year and a half. We heard Jordan Radio has taped some of the programmes, so we'll still be able to listen in on the DeJournettes as if they were just next door.

— Jennifer Hamarnah

Science and technology

The 'backbone' of origin of speech

By Edward Ashpole

THE HUMAN species talked its way out of a prehistoric life that was brutish and short. The making of stone tools and weapons led to simple technology and, eventually, to civilisation — but only after human language had developed. The origin of human language was a major event in earth's history but can it ever be discovered in the fossils of our ancestors? The answer may be yes.

Dr. Ann MacLarnon, of the Roehampton Institute in London, a specialist in the spinal column and cord of humans and apes and their prehistoric ancestors, has found anatomical evidence that our direct ancestor, Homo erectus, who had a brain about two-thirds the size of ours, may have been incapable of human language. This runs counter to a general assumption that human language probably evolved in Homo erectus.

It is obvious that chimps and gorillas do not possess the vocal anatomy to articulate words but it seems that they also lack the neural networks — a computer-like programme in the brain — which support human language. Scientists have taught them sign language and various computer techniques to communicate with us but only in a very basic manner. Yet it is not only the brain and the vocal anatomy that the great apes lack. They also lack sufficient nervous tissue in their spinal cord for the fine control of breathing essential for human speech.

Dr. MacLarnon has found that Homo sapiens have a relatively larger spinal cord than apes and monkeys in the region that controls the rib cage. The spinal cord passes through the vertebrae of the backbone and nerve fibres leave it to control the body and receive sensations. Because Dr. MacLarnon had spent years studying the vertebrae and spinal cords of apes and humans, she was asked to examine the fossil vertebrae of a Homo erectus skeleton discovered in Kenya. The skeleton of a young male (known as 15K) is 1.6 million years old and the most complete ever to be discovered. (Homo erectus is known to have lived in Africa, Asia and Europe from 1.8 million to 350,000 years ago).

In the process of studying the fossilised skeleton, the scientists involved with its discovery were puzzled by the relatively small size of the canal in its vertebrae through which the spinal cord would have passed. The leader of the group, British-born anthropologist Professor Alan Walker, knew of Dr. MacLarnon's work and asked her to examine the vertebrae.

She found that the canal is about as narrow as that in today's great apes, whereas fossil vertebrae of early Homo sapiens, of about 100,000 years ago, have spinal canals twice the size, comparable with ours. The conclusion reached was that the Homo erectus which lived in Kenya 1.6 million years ago did not have the nervous tissue in its spinal cord for the fine control of breathing needed for human speech and language.

"Homo erectus may have spoken only in short, laboured sounds," says Dr. MacLarnon. "Fine control of breathing, particularly control of expiration, is essential for human speech. Long phrases and stressed syllables, complex intonation patterns and other linguistic features all involve delicate control of air pressure."

It seems therefore that our spinal cord which houses the nerve cells that control our breathing when we speak, must have evolved between the 1.6-million-year-old Kenya skeleton and fossil evidence of Homo sapiens which is 100,000 years old. This may seem a large gap of uncertainty but the period of uncertainty was a lot larger.

Don't panic, but here comes the next one

By Jack Schofield

IT'S THE next big thing since the last big thing, which might have been Sony's MiniDisk or Philips's Digital Compact Cassette or DAT Audio Tape, or CD-Interactive (CDi), or Video CD or whatever. That little list shows how hard it is to launch a new format, be it for music, films or computer software. Many consumers have suffered from previous "format wars" — notably the battle between VHS and Betamax videotape systems. They know it's expensive to back a losing format and don't want to make the same mistake twice. But with the launch of DVD the consumer electronics industry seems to have learnt the same lesson.

Simon Heller is a marketing consultant working for the DVD Committee, a British suppliers' group, which is about to launch a publicity campaign. It is, he says, an example of "companies putting aside their own sales and marketing strategies for the good of the format." In this case, Sony, Pioneer, JVC, Panasonic, Philips and Toshiba are all on the same side, and it's not hard to understand why. Compact cassette tapes have been around since the 1960s, video tapes since the Seventies, and CDs since the early Eighties. By now they are all "mature" formats, which means most potential buyers have already got one and don't really want another.

What the suppliers want is a new format that will keep production lines turning for another 20 years. Film studios and content suppliers, retailers and magazine publishers like the idea as well. If you once bought all your favourite records on vinyl and then bought them again on CD, the industry loves you. Similarly if you've bought all your favourite movies on VHS tape, you'll want to buy them again on DVD-Video disc. And that's because DVD will provide higher quality, greater ease of use and more durability — and this is the lesson learned by manufacturers — DVD players will also play your audio CDs. The consumer pays, but everyone wins.

DVD has the same basic format as CD, which has been sensationally successful since it was launched by Philips and Sony in 1982. DVD will thus benefit from

some of the huge economies of scale that have helped make CDs so cheap to produce plus the ready supply of storage boxes, racks, and high-street shops with the right-sized shelves.

DVD is different, because computer technology has moved on in the past 16 years and it's now possible to put much more data on the same size disc. This increased capacity is useful in itself but DVD doubles it and has the capacity to double it again. The first doubling comes about because where audio CDs have only one layer of data, DVD can have two layers, one on top of the other. When the laser in the playing equipment reads the top layer, the bottom layer is out of focus, and vice versa. (In fact, in the laboratory, it's already possible to read disks with many more layers of information).

The second doubling comes from an even simpler idea: use both sides of the disc. DVD, unlike CD, allows for double-sided discs. Expanding the disc's capacity solves the main problem with the CD format. While it had enough capacity to hold one or even two vinyl LPs, it couldn't manage a full-length Hollywood film. Using data compression, about 74 minutes was the best you could get. Using two discs meant Joe Sixpack had to get up to change discs while watching a film, and real couch potatoes couldn't be expected to do that.

But DVD has so much more capacity than CD, it's possible to do much more. Since one layer of data on a DVD-Video disc can hold a movie lasting 135 minutes, it's possible to put four films on a dual-layer, double-sided disc. This has practical applications. It means that, for example, publishers can put a TV-style ("pan & scan") version of a film on one layer and a widescreen ("letter-box") version on another. The extra capacity could also be used to provide different cuts of a film, censored and uncensored versions, up to nine different camera angles, or "branching" videos with multiple storylines. DVD also has space for cinema-style sound tracks using six loudspeakers (left/centre/right, two rear speakers, and a subwoofer for extra bass), different language versions, subtitles, captions for children, lyrics for karaoke and

so on. Of course, not all DVD disks are going to have these features — publishers have to put them in — but the capability is there. And as with CD, there are many other potential uses, which is why manufacturers are calling them Digital Versatile Discs rather than Digital Video Discs. In fact, the more rapid adoption may not be in DVD players but in the personal computer and games console markets. Datamonitor predicts that in five years 78 per cent of the software bought by European consumers will be delivered on DVD-ROM instead of on CD-ROM.

Fujitsu, Japan's largest computer company, launched the first computer with a built-in DVD-ROM drive at the end of 1996, and DVD drives started to become popular in the United States last year. Mass market computer companies such as Time and Gateway are already offering PCs with DVD-ROM drives here and read/write or recordable drives may also become popular. But versatility can also create confusion. For example, Panasonic, one of the format's leading Japanese backers, touts the fact that its DVD-RAM computer drive can read DVD-ROM, DVD-Video, DVD-R (recordable), audio CD, CD-ROM, CD-R, CD-RW (read/write) and Video CD formats, and it foresees the time when DVD-RAM drives are small and cheap enough to use in video cameras. Richard Todd, Panasonic's U.K. spokesman, says: "DVD is all encompassing."

Although computer read/write drives can't produce DVD discs that can be read by today's DVD players, "eventually, the aim is that all the DVD formats will be compatible and interchangeable with each other." There has already been a spat between backers of different types of writable DVD, but Todd says the DVD-RAM version that Panasonic uses has been approved by the DVD Forum, the organisation that controls DVD standards. He reckons the not-approved DVD+RAM system, proposed last year by Philips and Sony and others, should now be called something different, like PC-RW (for Phase Change Read/Write).

There's another spat brewing between different approaches to audio. As well as playing today's audio

CDs, DVD players could be used to provide better sound reproduction, by using much higher sampling rates and storing a more accurate record of the music. A DVD Forum working group is due to decide on a DVD-Audio standard this month and it is clearly not going to support another proposal from Sony and Philips called SACD (Super Audio Compact Disc). Andy Clough, the editor of What Hi-Fi? magazine, says he expects the working group to allow for three different ways of storing hi-fi on DVD, "and two of them won't play on existing DVD players?" The one that will play on almost all of them — multi-channel Dolby Digital — is, he says, "more oriented towards surround sound than straight audio." It may appeal more to home cinema buffs than hi-fi purists. Super Audio CD does have an appeal. Since the DVD format provides for two layers of data, it says, why not use one for DVD-Audio and the other for CD? That way, the same disc will run in both types of player. SACD's advantage is that music publishers will

only have to produce, and consumers will only have to buy, one dual-format CD. Aware that standards battles are anathema to consumers, Philips's spokeswoman, Marijke Van Hooen, is ready to put a Dutch finger in the dyke. SACD, she says, "is still a technology discussion. We're showing the world why we think it's a good solution for backwards compatibility, and backwards compatibility with audio CD is very important. But we haven't entered into any product discussions yet, and you cannot exclude the possibility that the two groups will find a solution."

As for the different read/write formats, van Hooen points out that most are aimed at professional uses like disc mastering and computer storage, which are of no relevance to consumers. "You need to have a world standard for DVD-Video and DVD-ROM," she says. "But a DVD-RW (read/write) format for consumers, where you really need far more storage capacity, we don't see that happening in the next two to three years." Like the DVD-

Audio format, DVD-RW is still under discussion, and some onlookers doubt that it will ever be a practical way for consumers to record television programmes (2).

Indeed, D-VHS, a data version of good old audio tape, may turn out to be more attractive. The manufacturer JVC launched its first D-VHS recorder in the United States this summer and a D-VHS tape — which looks just like a normal VHS tape — can record seven hours, 21 hours, or 49 hours of video, depending on quality. Digital Compact Cassettes weren't a success, but digital VHS tapes may be a different story. In sum, while DVD may one day turn out to be a universal panacea, at the moment it's mainly just a better way of playing back movies for those who want it, and can afford it. So what should consumers do? "It's very simple," says Andy Clough of What Hi-Fi? "Sit back and wait! It's early days yet, and I think there's a lot of mileage left in audio CD. It's not going to disappear overnight."

— The Guardian

The age of reason

chip talk

By Jean-Claude Elias

THIS YEAR marks the eighteenth anniversary of personal computing. The first PCs appeared towards the beginning of 1980, and from a technological point of view the progress has been absolutely staggering. The performance of the machines, their storage capacity, their speed, the diversity of the tasks they can perform, and above all their user-friendliness have been dramatically improved. However, the most spectacular transformation may well be the change of attitude and mentality of the typical PC user.

Word Processing (WP), probably the most widely used application, has not only made traditional typing obsolete, it has also changed the way we think and write. In small and medium enterprises managers often prefer to "type" their correspondence using a WP programme, instead of asking their secretary to do it. Communication and confidentiality are greatly improved this way. In the same manner electronic spreadsheets have made financial analysis, bank statements and pricing studies a breeze to do. In summary, Office Automation (OA) is now a reality, with all its implications, including unfortunately its negative impact on unemployment.

OA and Internet are the two main components of the PC revolution. Not only offices are equipped with these two applications but a large number of households too. With such an important penetration of PCs everywhere, one may think that the man-computer relationship is smooth and easy. But somehow, even after 18

years of existence, personal computing doesn't seem to have reached the age of reason.

In addition to understandable technical difficulties and problems, there is still miscommunication and misunderstanding in the PC world. It happens between the users and their machines, between the users and the computer professionals and between the professionals and the industry. It ranges from simple malfunctioning of hardware and software to ignorance of a programme's suitability for a given task, incompatibility, lack of information, misinformation and perpetual modifications to systems.

When they are unable to access the Internet, users remain puzzled and can't tell if the modem is down, if the telephone line is to blame or if the software is not correctly set up. When Microsoft releases a new version of Windows even seasoned professionals have to spend sometime ironing out its idiosyncrasies not to mention bugs. Cross-platforms true compatibility (between different machines, software and operating systems) is still an elusive dream.

Perhaps the main reason why personal computing hasn't yet reached the age of reason is the fact that its industry is still in full acceleration. Maturity involves a certain dose of stability. Currently, information technology is anything but stable — it is moving ahead and undergoing changes at lightning speed. Neither PC users nor the industry are to blame for this lack of maturity. It is just a situation we have to accept and it is not necessarily a bad thing. In a way, it is like being young for longer than you expect it.

Arab Bank knocks AFM's price index down to 163.09 points

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The continued decline in the share price of the Arab Bank at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) reflected negatively on the stock exchange and led to a 1.57 points drop in the AFM's general price index, brokers said Wednesday.

The stock exchange's daily bulletin indicated that the price index stood at 163.09 points compared to 165.69 on Tuesday.

The bulletin showed that the Arab Bank, the Kingdom's largest financial institution, lost JD4.75 during Wednesday's trading, down to JD201.25 from JD206.

Mohammad Bilbeisi, the general manager of a brokerage firm, said the continued fall in the share price of the Arab Bank was responsible for the retreat in the overall performance of the stock market.

"Foreign investors resorted to sell some of their Arab Bank shares but the supply did not attract a similar demand in the market," Bilbeisi told the Jordan Times.

"Political developments in the region weighed heavily on the market and added more difficulties to the AFM," the broker said, referring to the recent Turkish-Syrian crisis and the stalemate in the peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

The broker noted that some "improvement" is expected to take place next week and that might activate the market "for a short period of time."

"Experience has taught us that continuous declines

or increases in share prices are followed by a period of recovery or correction, which we expected to take place either on Sunday or Monday," Bilbeisi said.

"The prices have registered an extremely low level which is a attractive for all investors. I think something is going to happen next week," he said.

But the broker said that a "general recovery" in the market cannot be predicted in the short run, "because that depends on the performance of the companies by the end of this year," the general manager added.

"Economic recession in the country, modest profits recorded by local firms in the first half of this year were responsible for discouraging investors and brokers towards AFM's firms," he added.

But despite the drop in the price index, the AFM's turnover almost doubled during Wednesday's activities, which recorded JD1.06 million compared to JD513,548 on Tuesday, said Naim Naqeb, another broker.

He indicated that a transfer of shares totalling JD465,842 was registered on the shares of the Industrial Development Bank.

Arab Bank share of the turnover amounted to JD438,440, the broker said.

Out of the 19 commercial banks operating in Jordan, shares of only seven were traded during Wednesday's activities, the bulletin showed.

The parallel market recorded a very low turnover, which amounted to JD36,027.

Saudi Arabia pays 'high price' for expatriates — minister

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia's interior minister said the country was paying a "high price" for foreign workers and urged Saudis not to shun any job offered to them, the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Wednesday.

Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz told a meeting of Saudi businessmen that the kingdom was taking steps to ensure more Saudis take up jobs currently held by foreigners and said authorities may soon announce new measures to boost the employment of nationals, SPA said.

"We appreciate those who come to our country and work with us. But, of course, we pay a price for those who come from abroad and it is a very high price, both positively and negatively," SPA quoted the minister as saying at the meeting in Riyadh on Tuesday night.

"His highness expressed the hope that Saudi nationals would work in all fields...and not shun any job, and explained that if we turned down those jobs, non-Saudis must take them," it said.

Oil-rich Saudi Arabia is eager to replace many of the estimated six million foreign workers — who make up one-third of the country's population — with its nationals.

The government has told private firms employing more than 20 people to increase their Saudi staff by five per cent a year.

A Saudi newspaper said in August that some 750,000 workers had been expelled since an amnesty for foreigners working illegally in the kingdom expired in October 1997.

Diplomats have said many Saudis still frowned upon doing manual labour, although attitudes were slowly changing.

Prince Nayef said priority must be given to employment of Saudis in security-related jobs in hospitals, banks and hotels.

"There is no justification that non-Saudis should work in security in these places," he said, without elaborating.

The interior ministry may soon announce a list of jobs in which only Saudis could work, he added.

Prince Nayef also said vocational training was an important tool to boost the employment of Saudis and urged local companies to help in training nationals.

He said a committee consisting of several ministers had been set up to study youth employment and said guidelines would be issued within two months.

Business Economics. "This is a time for monetary policy to be especially alert."

Analysts read Greenspan's remarks as indicating the Fed's readiness to continue cutting rates to both prevent an economic crash and boost liquidity levels in jittery capital markets.

The Fed last week cut its key short-term interest rate by a modest quarter-percentage point to 5.25 per cent to cushion the effects of a global financial crisis on the U.S. economy. But many in financial markets deemed the cut insufficient to fend off the economic slump that has hurt many parts of the world.

"He's certainly opened the door to another rate cut," said Diane Swonk, economist at First Chicago NBD, after listening to the speech, adding that the Fed would need to monitor events as they evolve and react to them as warranted.

The Fed next meets to debate interest rates on Nov. 17, but some Fed watchers read Greenspan's forthright speech as opening the door to a possible rate move even before that — a highly unusual step which the Fed has not taken since 1994.

John Silvia, chief economist at Scudder Kemper Investments Inc. in Chicago, said such a move could not be ruled out.

"What he's telling us is that we don't know what it is going to take to keep the

economy moving ahead. Because of all these unknowns, there's a lot more of a possibility of an interest-rate move," he said.

Greenspan's comments briefly helped to boost the prices of inflation-sensitive bonds which had suffered losses overnight.

Key U.S. stocks also traded higher.

Greenspan said a "marked shift in investor psychology away from risk and toward liquidity and safety has exacerbated the problems in foreign markets, where deflationary forces remain virulent" and had spread to U.S. financial markets.

"It is pretty obvious that the outlook for 1999 for the U.S. economy has deteriorated measurably," he warned.

While insisting that a full-blown credit crunch was still a distant danger, Greenspan recounted U.S. companies' mounting problems to raise capital because scared lenders preferred to hold on to their cash — to an extent that he had not seen in some 50 years of looking at the economy on a daily basis.

"This risk aversion is showing up as increases in equity premiums and the cost of capital for capital investment," Greenspan said.

Describing the situation

(Continued on page 9)

U.S. may cut interest rates again

WASHINGTON (R) — Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan on Wednesday raised the prospect of further cuts in interest rates to keep the U.S. economy on track in the face of a looming credit crunch triggered by global financial turmoil.

Greenspan told an economists' group the Fed was virtually certain the U.S. economy would slow from its still-solid pace, particularly because lenders appeared to be holding on to their purse strings in the face of increasing economic uncertainty — thus depriving even viable companies of much-needed capital.

"We are clearly facing a set of forces that should be dampening demand going forward to an unknown extent," Greenspan told the National Association for

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The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.8127	0.5888	1.3181	123.84	1.5296	1595.90	1.8202	5.4139
DE Mark	0.5201	-	0.3648	0.8168	76.91	0.9478	987.68	1.1272	3.3529
GB Sterling	1.6984	2.7408	-	2.2385	210.81	2.5979	2708.02	3.0895	9.1901
CH Franc	0.7587	1.2232	0.4463	-	94.12	1.1599	1208.84	137.91	4.1024
JP Yen	0.0081	1.3007	0.4747	1.0635	-	1.2340	126.74	146.74	4.3632
CA Dollar	0.6538	1.0482	0.3795	0.8635	1.23	-	1036.38	1.1818	3.5154
IT Lira	0.0005	1.0110	0.3689	0.9826	1289.16	0.9583	-	11.40	3.3901
NL Guilder	0.5494	88.67	0.3235	72.47	68.05	0.8409	876.86	-	2.9732
FR Franc	0.1847	0.2982	0.1088	24.3709	22.88	0.2827	33.64	33.6400	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7507	0.3770	3.6400	0.3022	3.6728	1502.00	3.4085
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2901	0.5317	5.1340	0.4262	5.1803	2118.48	4.8032
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0806	0.98	400.46	0.9080
Bahrain Dinar	2.66	1.8807	9.9493	-	9.66	0.8016	9.74	3984.30	9.0356
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0830	1.01	412.64	0.9356
Kuwait Dinar	3.3091	2.3461	12.4113	1.2475	12.05	-	12.15	4970.22	0.9356
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.026	0.9911	0.0823	-	408.98	0.9272
Lebanese/1000	0.67	0.4720	2.4971	0.2510	2.4234	0.2012	2.4453	-	2.2673
Egyptian	0.2936	0.2082	1.1014	0.1107	1.0689	0.0887	1.0785	441.05	-

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY				
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4301	0.15988	0.38156	33.0469				
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.43923	0.16031	0.35991	33.7484				
KW Dinar	3.3091	3.33903	1.94818	4.363	410.172				
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.27899	1.56177	3.49773	328.839				
CY Pound	2.0844	3.3652	1.2279	2.7482	258.417				

Energy									
Oils	Last	revised							
Brent	0.00	0.00							
W. Texas	15.29	15.57							
Bonny	0.00	0.00							
Dubai	13.49	13.77							
U.L. Gas	145.00	145.00							

Metal Prices									
Metal	Bid	Offer							
Gold (oz's)	297.8	298.3							
Silver (oz's)	5.07	5.1							
Platinum (oz's)	346	348							
AL (3 Months)	1335	1337							
CU (3 Months)	1610	1614							
Zinc (3 Months)	990	995							
Lead (3 Months)	522	524							
Ni (3 Months)	3905	3910							

Libor Fixing									
C'ncy	Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year					
USD	5.4375	5.3711	5.1875	4.9688					
GBP	7.4531	7.3125	7.1250	6.8750					
JPY	0.3281	0.3789	0.4141	0.4483					
DEM	3.5000	3.5625	3.5508	3.5000					
FRF	1.3281	1.5000	1.5508	1.5938					
CHF	3.5000	3.5410	3.5352	3.5273					
ITL	5.0150	4.7660	4.2080						

Tillawi highlights Messe Frankfurt fair

MESSE FRANKFURT and L Tillawi & Sons Company held a press conference Tuesday at the Marriott Hotel. Mohammed Tillawi delivered a speech in which he said that Messe Frankfurt is growing rapidly and that it now has 10 large halls with 25 floors.

Messe Frankfurt, he added, hosts 55 trade fairs in Frankfurt and 17 trade fairs in other places around the world.

Tillawi said: "Messe Frankfurt exhibition grounds are situated favourably in regards to transport facilities and can be reached very easily. Either comfortably by car (direct connection to motorway) or by public transport. The distance to the airport ranges at about 20 minutes by car, from Frankfurt

main train station you can reach Messe Frankfurt in about 15 minutes by foot. In total the exhibition grounds cover 400,000 square metres, the available indoor area amounts to 274,000 square metres.

Messe Frankfurt exhibition grounds are clearly structured. If required they can be divided up into three sectors of events. All halls are connected indoors by the "Via mobile," that leads you to your destination fast and comfortably.

Messe Frankfurt is continuously exerting all efforts to cooperate and coordinate with all airline companies to facilitate and ease travel arrangements for business travellers who are and will attend Messe Frankfurt trade fairs and exhibitions.

The Arts Center
Accredited Studio & workshop courses

Course Name	Course Description
Drawing in pencil (1)	Shading in pencil to create the three dimensional perspective; drawing the still life such as flowers and fruit baskets.
Drawing in pencil (2)	Differentiating between colors in pencil drawing to produce tonalities of color still life such as glass and metal shapes.
Watercolor (1)	Understanding color theory. Painting of color still life using the basic color technique of painting on dry paper.
Ceramics (1)	Initial instruction in basic decorating and engraving techniques, handbuilding of simple objects and ware.
Ceramics (2)	A continuation of instruction in traditional handbuilding techniques; initial instruction in glazing techniques.
Sculpture (1)	Building sculpture in clay over a wire armature, then making the mold to produce the permanent sculpture.

For registration call: 5529616

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

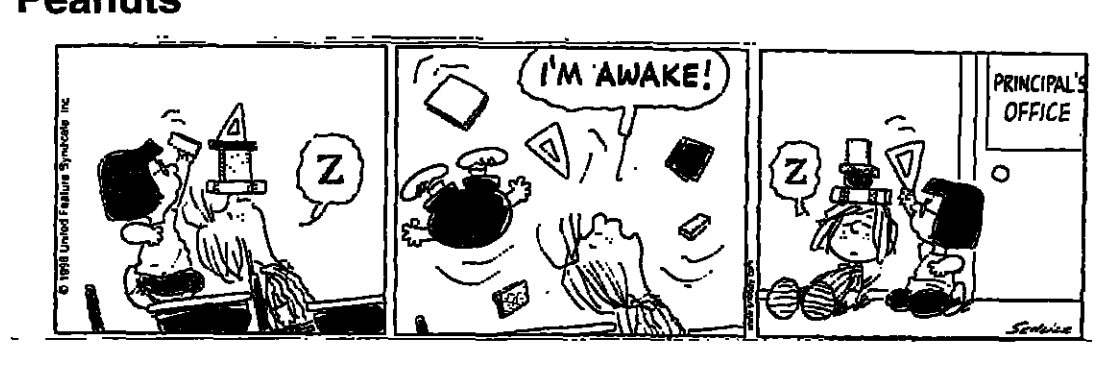
ACROSS

- 1 Fine-grained mineral
- 5 Grit
- 10 Closely confined
- 14 Square measure
- 15 Employer
- 16 Abu Dhabi leader
- 17 Gibson garnish
- 19 Rod Stewart hit, "Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?"
- 20 Trademark jeans
- 21 Lead-ins
- 23 Shows up
- 26 Leak stopper
- 27 Put out the fire
- 28 Nobel Prize winner
- 29 Mosey along
- 30 Winter Cather
- 31 Med. personnel
- 34 Molotov
- 35 Telephones
- 36 Wild time
- 37 Way in: abbr.
- 38 Sweet treat
- 39 Unit of magnetic flux density
- 40 Incompetent
- 42 Anne Sullivan's pupil
- 43 Obviously
- 45 Superlatively skeletal
- 46 Tight spot
- 47 Rio de la
- 48 Icelandic saga
- 49 Poisonous slitherer
- 54 Airline to Tel Aviv
- 55 Smell
- 56 Salsa
- 57 Florida islands
- 58 Wanders randomly
- 59 So what is new?

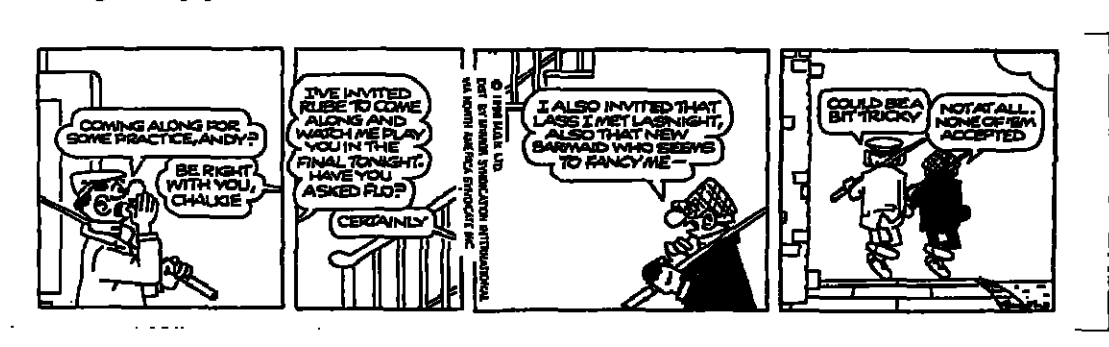
DOWN

- 1 Keg feature
- 2 Exist
- 3 Poetic pasture
- 4 Site of Mary Queen of Scots imprisonment
- 5 Jostled
- 6 Short skirts
- 7 "The Black Prince" author
- 8 Lion's name
- 9 South African golfer
- 10 Mashing tool
- 11 Ireland
- 12 37th President
- 13 Secret meeting
- 18 Landing place on a river
- 22 Astronauts' grp.
- 23 Snyring
- 24 Numerals
- 25 Rolling Stones hit
- 26 Foolish
- 28 Oscar or
- 30 Paley
- 32 Paris
- 33 Show surprise
- 35 San Francisco ride
- 36 Trust
- 38 Sandburg or Sagan
- 39 Temporary shelters
- 41 Twangy sounds
- 42 Eucalyptus eaters
- 43 Effrontery
- 44 Soup dispenser
- 45 Point a finger
- 47 O.T. book
- 48 Gold in Madrid
- 51 " in the Family"
- 52 Ring wins, briefly
- 53 Ogle

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LOFOD

ENSIO

EVIDID

LIPOCE

Answer: _____

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: _____

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: INKED YIELD NOVICE TWINGE

Answer: Studying outside on a sunny day will get you this — KNOWLEDGE

Business
PNA war
for tour
Asian
in
Tillawi
highlights
Messe Frankfurt fair
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All halls are connected
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to your destination fast
and comfortably.
Messe Frankfurt is
continuously exerting
all efforts to cooperate
and coordinate with
all airline companies to
facilitate and ease
travel arrangements for
business travellers who
are and will attend
Messe Frankfurt trade
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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

PNA wants Jordan to be the eastern gate for tourists coming to Palestinian areas

THE PALESTINIAN National Authority (PNA) is seriously seeking to have Jordan become the eastern gate for Palestinian tourism whether through the Queen Alia International Airport or tourist buses, PNA Tourism Minister Murt Abu Ayya said. The minister said he reviewed with Jordan's Tourism Minister Akel Beltagi the Jordanian experience in the field of tourism as both sides have common elements and their experiences are almost similar especially in marketing. "Legislations related to tourism were also discussed so as to benefit from the Jordanian

experience in this regard," Abu Ayya added. Asked to evaluate the tourism ties between Jordan and the PNA, Abu Ayya said that before 1967, nearly 600,000 tourists visited Jordan compared to only 100,000 visitors to Israel. "This requires a higher degree of cooperation with Jordan so as the Kingdom would become the tourism gate for Palestine," he said stressing that the economic agreements signed between Israel and the PNA in Paris emphasised that Jordan is the crossing point for tourist groups going to Palestine (Al-Dustour).

Asian crisis cited as the main reason in prices of cars in Jordan

ACCORDING TO Hassan E'llyan, general manager of the Hyundai company in Jordan, prices of all types of cars have declined by between 10 and 20 per cent. He attributed the drop to many factors, mainly the fall in Asian currencies and the weak demand for cars as a result of economic recession witnessed by various world countries. Furthermore, he saw the competition in a saturated local market as another reason for the decline in prices.

E'llyan saw the general car dealers as representing unfair competition to the car agents and demanded that the consumers be given protection because the car dealers do not abide by Jordanian specifications and do not provide the after-sale services.

Sami Asfour, general manager of the Volvo company in Jordan said Volvo cars were not affected by the fall in prices, but he admitted that demand has noticeably dropped. However, Asfour did not see car dealers harming the company's business because "it is difficult for traders to import our cars (Volvo) to car shows in the Kingdom."

Asfour attributed the low volume of sales to higher customs duties and the buyer's emphasis on the price more than the specifications of the car. Another reason cited by the Volvo agent was that regional offices are not allowed to buy cars which have more than 3000 cc capacity and that licensing fees on these cars were raised.

Hassan Tabbara, the general manager of Al-Tawfiq Automobiles and Equipment Company pointed to the Asian crisis as a reason for the drop in the prices of cars. "The Asian crisis has negatively affected the car prices and investments in vehicles," he said. Tabbara added that still competition in the small Jordanian market has forced the agents of world car companies to lower the profit margin in an attempt to escape the general recession in the market.

He revealed that the government will issue special specifications for cars before the end of the year. Such a step will organise the trading in the car market and improve the level of specifications for imported cars (Al-Rai' + Ad-Dustour).

Greenspan sees U.S. economy slowing

(Continued from page 8)

in the U.S. economy as "fluid," he added: "We do not know how far it will go, or how much it will affect consumer and business spending here at home." Most forecasters — including the International Monetary Fund and the National Association for Business Economics — expect the U.S. economy to grow by little more than two per cent in 1999, after growing by an estimated 3.5 per cent this year.

For now, Greenspan acknowledged the domestic economy was still in good shape and labour markets still unusually tight.

"The truth of the matter is we've got an economy which as of now...is really still quite an impressive sight," he said, even though he acknowledged that the manufacturing sector had been hit by falling exports and rising imports from Asia.

Greenspan's overall tone represented a major shift from only a few months ago when most Fed officials warned repeatedly against economic overheating caused by excessively tight labour markets and urged banks to tighten up lax lending standards.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SIRIYAH
TELEPHONE: 607177 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 07/10/1998



PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADING	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
3,555.500	170.000	ARAB BANK	16.5	-99	80	2170	438440	206.00	201.25	4.75-
3,200.000	1,000.000	BANK OF JORDAN	8	0.00	7	11850	12571	1.06	1.06	-
2,680.000	1,550.000	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	11.1	6.56	2	294837	468842	1.58	1.58	-
6,310.000	2,610.000	THE HOUSING BK.	17.8	3.56	26	11080	31248	2.85	2.81	-0.04-
3,830.000	530.000	JOR. GULF BANK	8	0.00	1	2000	1060	53	53	-
3,910.000	1,670.000	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	17.4	0.00	4	343	581	1.70	1.70	-
3,900.000	1,350.000	JOR. INV. FUND	21.8	3.52	3	1448	2054	1.42	1.42	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS										
2,850	1,840	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	7.3	9.62	4	1300	3408	2.60	2.60	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS										
2,240	1,410	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.73	15	7809	11295	1.45	1.44	-0.01-
9,080	7,920	JOR. HOTEL TOURISM	24.2	0.00	1	400	3632	9.08	9.08	-
3,900	1,550	ABDUL ELECTRICITY	10.9	5.65	10	5900	9681	1.69	1.77	-0.08+
4,010	4,010	HIGH MIXERALS / JEM	8	0.00	1	100	401	4.01	4.01	-
590	270	JORDAN INTL. TRD.	8	0.00	1	300	325	27	27	-
4,600	1,880	JOR. INTL. INV. FUND	9.4	2.12	3	1250	2361	1.90	1.90	-0.01-
1,790	1,060	UNIFIED CO.	5.0	9.82	6	1600	5152	1.12	1.12	-
1,350	1,050	UNIFIED FOR FUND. INV.	1.4	5.79	2	1300	1219	1.10	1.11	-0.01+
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS										
3,700	1,840	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	11.0	5.95	13	3445	6405	1.87	1.85	-0.02-
6,500	3,750	ARAB POTASH CO.	18.5	5.23	3	480	1815	3.80	3.75	-0.05-
11,250	10,050	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.48	14	1086	11284	10.52	10.47	-0.05-
2,620	1,050	INDUSTRIAL COMM. GR.	67.4	0.00	2	900	1026	1.14	1.14	-
5,740	2,400	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	7.1	2.93	19	3130	8019	2.58	2.56	-0.02-
1,440	1,020	JOR. PIPES MANFCT.	9.1	9.09	2	1090	1090	1.10	1.10	-
6,350	4,750	JOR. ALUMIN. IND. INV.	6.3	6.70	7	800	4181	5.30	5.22	-0.08-
2,980	1,700	ARAB ALUM. IND.	13.2	13.97	1	750	1343	1.80	1.79	-0.01-
790	270	ARAB PAPER CORP. TRD.	23.2	0.00	1	9500	7220	76	76	-
1,790	1,060	NATIONAL FERTIL. IND.	9	15.15	6	693	693	44	44	-
570	280	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	1	1000	290	29	29	-
680	340	JOR. ROCKETMOT. INDOS.	9	0.00	1	200	70	35	35	-
2,700	1,760	UNION. CHEM. INDOS.	12.3	9.92	10	2000	2001	98	1.07	-0.03+
710	380	JOR. SULPHATE CHEM.	7.2	0.00	2	600	414	69	69	-
1,470	1,150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	13.6	4.88	5	2750	1065	38	38	-
2,400	990	JOR. JET. INDOS. / JEM	9.9	9.68	4	908	1115	1.23	1.23	-
1,560	1,200	NATL. CHLORINE	8.6	8.13	2	228	1457	1.23	1.23	-0.01+
1,080	600	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	8.7	16.13	4	5000	3070	61	62	-0.01+
1,560	1,150	EL - RAY READY WEAR	45.0	0.00	1	1289	1648	1.28	1.28	-0.01-
1,310	910	INTEL. TOBACCO	7.2	5.66	7	4450	4584	1.04	1.03	-0.01-
1,220	860	UNION CH. & VEG.	9.9	0.00	3	350	225	91	90	-0.01-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09
GRAND TOTAL										
1,050	850	REPORT & FIN. BKT. 752	15.6	0.00	6	9250	5363	85	84	-0.01-
1,000	700	JOR. INT. INSURANCE CO	8	0.00	1	150	140	89	93	-0.04+
490	270	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	1	50	15	28	29	-0.01+
480	140	JOR. TRADE FAIR	9	0.00	1	50	19	38	38	-
800	500	UNION INV.	9	0.00	4	20000	10600	53	53	-
620	240	ARAB FIM. INVEST.	9	0.00	2	300	120	24	24	-
240	990	JOR. JET. INDOS. / JEM	9.9	9.68	4	1250	150	13	12	-0.01-
430	200	ARAB INTL. INV. FUND	24.2	0.00	6	2000	420	21	21	-
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1350	190	TEL. IND.	9	0.00	3	2000	400	20	20	-
950	540	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	1	5000	2800	56	56	-
640	430	NATL. POLYTRIC	9	0.00	1	300	159	51	51	-
600	420	OFFICE HEATING CO.	9	0.00	1	587	200	34	34	-
1,310	760	NUTRITION	9	0.00	2	500	405	82	81	-0.01-
GRAND TOTAL										
INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09	INDEX: 163.09

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Always spend money as if you didn't have enough. Then you'll have enough when something unexpected comes along. You have pinching pennies. The trick is to do it because you want to, just for fun. And think of something neat to buy for yourself that's not already on your list. With this procedure, you may be able to swing it.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This is a good day for discussing financial matters. The subject may come up at work or at home. Let people know how you'd like to have the money disbursed. They'll spend too much if you don't. You're good at figuring out how to get the best deals for your resources at hand, so definitely put in your two cents' worth.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're feeling better as the day goes on and things get checked off your lists. Keep busy; even do the stuff you've been putting off. You'll be amazed at how your life lightens up. If you've been having trouble thinking clearly, that could be the problem. The stuff you postpone or ignore has a way of clouding your thinking.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) The moon going into Gemini spurs you even more toward education. Gemini has insatiable curiosity, and that'll rub off on you. Some of your most interesting discoveries today will be through the grapevine. To make sure your own secrets don't get spread all over town, keep them to yourself.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You're a great team captain and today you'll get to prove that again. You've got a big job, and you're under pressure to make it happen. You'll have to motivate others to help, or the whole thing will go splat. Well, success is supposed to be just on the other side of split. So even if your team goes up, don't you give up.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're strong, assertive and opinionated. That could come in handy today, since you're likely to run into an argument. You may think it's the other guy's fault, but that's only half the story. You like to stir things up once in a while, too. So if you get into a fight, take responsibility and make sure it has a positive outcome.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're doing pretty well right now, but don't get cocky. Your plans look good, but they can get fouled up on a technicality. Don't overlook the details; that's the sort of thing that could sink the ship. Also, be careful if you travel, especially this afternoon. First, check your belts and hoses and gasoline level.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Quick thinking is required today, as well as quick action. You'll have an opportunity to make a really good deal, but you'll have to be firm and decisive. A person who's selling or buying won't be, and that's your advantage. You decide what's the best price and talk the other guy into it. This will be easy.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) People want to tell stories today. That happens to be one of your favourite occupations, too, but be careful not to do it during working hours. There's still plenty that must be done before tomorrow. If you do finish it today, there will be more time for playing tomorrow, which is a much better idea anyway.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You had a bit of a free ride yesterday, but that's drawing to a close. Your luck holds this morning, but by afternoon hard work is required to achieve your goals. Don't despair. This too will pass. Meanwhile, explain what you're trying to accomplish for the zillionth time to a person you thought was smarter.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Your luck is improving, and holds good for the next several days. A recent frustration is starting to fade. Conditions haven't changed all that much, but your attitude is shifting. You're starting to feel like you can handle anything. You'll be even more powerful tomorrow, so do the planning now and make your move then.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Don't procrastinate today. A normally easy job could become practically impossible later, as distractions keep you from focusing your attention. It's hard enough for you to focus attention anyway, so do as much as you can now, while conditions are right. You'll be able to tell the difference once they change.

Birthstone of September: Opal — Tourmaline

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Intellectually, you're amazing right now. You're also good in a practical sense. You can see an opportunity to increase your income and move on it quickly. You'll also be able to figure out what needs to be done in less time than usual. The number of possibilities that could appear increases greatly.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Again, the conversation is lively. Money's involved, and how to distribute the workload. The person who does the most doesn't always make the most. Today, it looks like the person who does the best thinking and figures out how to use resources the most wisely will be most generously rewarded. That could be you.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're looking very good today and you're absolutely brilliant. You're making an excellent impression on a person you admire. You're an excellent conversationalist all of the time, but today, you're awesome. You're a teacher and a student simultaneously, and having a great time. Cover as much ground as possible.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) This phase may not be all that comfortable, but you're getting a lot done. What you don't know how to do, you can learn. Even jobs that used to be intimidating will seem routine. You're breaking through barriers. You're changing, growing, becoming wiser and more highly skilled. Don't be bummed out by the pressure. Rejoice in it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) The preparation you did yesterday will start to pay off today. If you didn't do any preparation, you're going to have to think on your feet. The action is fast and furious, with lots of changes going on. You're pretty lucky right now, so you should come out smelling like a rose.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) People will be in talkative moods today. That's interesting, but it could be counterproductive. If you can manage to keep them on task, you could be richly rewarded. You're one of the few people with the ability to take on a challenge like this. Keep them focused and you could wind up with a big bonus.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Looks like things will go a little better for you today. There were a couple of

bugs to work out, but you've done that by now, right? You should have smooth sailing from here on out. If you get a chance to take off early on a weekend trip, do it. Travel conditions are much better now than they were yesterday.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) There's more than enough information flying around today. Your job to determine whether it's accurate and whether you can use it. People will be interested in talking, so if there's anything you want to know, just ask. Meanwhile, the opposite is also true. If you want anything to remain a secret, keep it to yourself.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This would be a great day for a party. Everybody's in the mood, so why not? It's a celebration, actually, of whatever you've accomplished by now. If you aren't quite finished, push to get it done before the end of the day. A friend has a lot to tell you tonight, so make time to listen.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Somebody has the information you need. If you can get him or her to talk (and that should be the easy part), you're in. The challenge will be to steer the conversation in the direction you want it to go. Otherwise, you could waste a lot of time today listening to idle gossip. Be directive. You can get away with it.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You're always intelligent, of course, but today you're awesome. The advantage is in your charm. Not only do you have the facts straight, but you also have the support of just about everyone you meet. They want you to win, and that certainly doesn't hurt. Now's the time to ask for that really big favour.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You should be able to get something you want for your house today, but you may have to make that concession you've been avoiding. It looks like a loved one wants things a certain way and you have other ideas. Go along with your sweetheart and you'll be pleasantly surprised. It'll look better than you thought it would.

Birthstone of September: Opal — Tourmaline

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1st round of Premier League concludes Friday

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The first round of the Premier League Championship concludes Friday and will stop for only three days before the second and final round of the country's leading soccer event begins Oct. 12.

Action returned to the ten-team competition this week after a month-long halt for the Arab Cup finals in Qatar where Jordan was eliminated in the first round.

During the eighth week, Al Faisali and Al Wihdat remained atop the standings with the former leading on goal difference after a 2-0 win over Al Jazireh.

Wihdat fans were not impressed with the mere 2-1 win over last-placed Al Ahli. The titleholders will next play Al Qadissieh Friday while Al Faisali meet Al Arabi.

Top teams like Al Wihdat, Al Faisali and Al Ramtha now have their lineups complete after they played the Jordan Football Association (JFA) Shield Championship without their national team players who were on duty in the Arab Cup.

Premier League newcomers Kufroum, who entered Jordanian soccer archives when they won the Shield — their first ever major title and the country's fourth annual soccer competition — lost to Al Ramtha 3-1 and will next play Al Hussein.

Al Ramtha host 6th-placed Al Jazireh in one of three matches Thursday, while Al Ahli will try to beat Shabab Al Hussein to move out of the last spot.

The Premier League Championship kicked off in April but witnessed a series of delays starting with the month-long boycott of seven teams over the issue

of ticket sales allocation before the JFA settled the dispute.

The championship then resumed only to halt again in June during which the national team prepared for the Arab Cup qualifiers. It then resumed Aug. 9 before stopping again for the Arab Cup finals.

Al Wihdat are this year looking for their 5th consecutive Premier League title. They won the season opening fourth Cup Winners' Cup.

Al Faisali won the second of the season's four soccer championships when they won their record 10th Jordan Cup.

Al Wihdat have won the Cup and Cup Winners Cup in the last two years and the Premier League in the last four.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Al Faisali	8	7	1	0	22	4	21
Al Wihdat	8	7	0	1	19	4	21
Al Ramtha	8	4	1	3	7	6	13
Al Jazireh	8	3	3	2	12	11	12
Al Qadissieh	8	2	3	3	11	12	9
Al Hussein	8	2	3	3	7	10	9
Al Ahli	8	1	5	2	7	12	8
Al Arabi	8	1	3	4	10	18	6
Kufroum	8	1	3	5	5	16	5
Shabab Al Hussein	8	0	3	5	4	9	3

Zoff defends football against doping allegations

FLORENCE (AFP) — Italy's national coach Dino Zoff mounted a strong defence of football here Tuesday in the wake of recent allegations of widespread drug taking.

"Future events may prove me wrong but I'm convinced that doping is not a part of the footballing philosophy," he said.

"Of course there are exceptions but I'm ready to rule out the use of EPO and anabolic steroids," the ex-Juventus goalkeeper said.

Of the on-going inquiries that have produced almost daily revelations of drug-taking Zoff, preparing Italy for their European championship clash with Switzerland on Saturday, added: "I'm optimistic because up to now only irregularities at the anti-doping laboratory have been uncovered."

ASF official calls on Iraq and Kuwait to take part in Pan-Arab Games

Sa'ad proposes decreasing number of events to reduce cost

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Arab Sports Federation (ASF) Secretary General Othman Al Sa'ad Wednesday urged all Arab states to take part in the upcoming Pan-Arab Games scheduled to be held here next summer.

Speaking at a press conference, Sa'ad urged Iraq and Kuwait to put their differences aside and join other Arab states in the sport contests.

He noted that some Kuwaiti sports officials have linked their participation in the tournament with the exclusion of Iraqi teams and warned that they would boycott the Amman Games if Baghdad participated.

He was referring to a statement by president of Kuwait's Olympic Committee Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahd Al Sabah who said that his country will refrain from taking part in the upcoming event if Iraq was invited.

"We understand the stand of each side," said Sa'ad, who arrived from Damascus early Wednesday, "but we hope that all parties will take part."

"The absence of Kuwait or Iraq is a negative step which we try to overcome. The question now is who is going to attend Kuwait or Iraq," Sa'ad, a Saudi national, said.

During the 8th Pan-Arab Games, which took place in Beirut in July 1997, Iraq was barred from competition following extensive pressure from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait who donated \$28 million to Lebanon to repair infrastructure damaged during the civil war.

Sa'ad stressed that the tournament will be inaugurated on the scheduled day without any delay or postponement, referring to reports that it coincides with other international events such as the African Tournament and the World Athletics Championship.

"The tournament will take place on time," Sa'ad announced, ruling out speculations about a possible postponement.

Sa'ad announced the formation of an ASF Supervision and Follow Up Committee, headed by Games director Isam Aridali, to oversee the preparations for the Amman Games.

The five-man committee, includes representatives from the Arab League, the Council of Arab Sport and Youth Ministers, the ASF, and a fifth Jordanian representative.

He said the committee will hold a meeting by the end of this month, probably in Saudi Arabia, to discuss issues pertaining to the tournament.

The ASF official was accompanied by expert who discussed with the Jordanian side ways to market the tournament, especially in terms of TV and media coverage and how to promote the event to attract more viewers.

Among Sa'ad's other proposals to the Jordanian side was to decrease the number of events at the Games which stand at 26.

Sa'ad said that bridge, snooker, polo and bowling are among sports that find no popularity in the Arab World, adding that it will be better to remove them from listed games.

"Removing such games will also reduce the cost of the tournament which we need right now due to the lack of sufficient funds to finance the tournament," the ASF official told reporters.

He said the list should include 12 compulsory games, four team sports and eight individual. Other optional

events could be added depending on the number of countries willing to take part in each event.

During his one-day visit, Sa'ad toured the sport installations in Amman and Irbid and expressed satisfaction regarding preparations Jordan is undertaking.

Among the sites he visited were Al Hassan Sport City in Irbid, the indoor stadium and the Olympic swimming pool, both under construction.

Jordan has earmarked JD11 million for the Pan-Arab Games with JD4 million allocated for spending this year. However, recent reports noted that the total cost would amount to JD18 million.

Since the ASF advanced the date of the upcoming Games to 1999, the Council of Arab Sports Ministers increased aid to the Kingdom to enable it to prepare infrastructure and update sports facilities ahead of the largest gathering of Arab youth.

Aid from the Arab League had been raised to \$200,000 while the Council of Arab Ministers will grant \$1,000,000 instead of \$700,000.

Additional sponsorship for Jordan's bid will be garnered through slashing the 50 per cent ASF margin of profit on promotion and television coverage in addition to selling television broadcasting rights to private companies, which would secure millions needed to cover costs.

The 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut witnessed the best Jordanian showing since the Pan-Arab Games were launched. Competing in 14 of the 20 events, Jordan finished 5th overall among 19 competing countries, taking a total of 40 medals, including 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze medals.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Olano considering ONCE offer

MADRID (AFP) — Abraham Olano, winner of this year's Tour de Spain, is considering an offer to quit the Banesto team and rejoin the other leading Spanish team ONCE. "Nothing has been signed, but next week we are going to seriously discuss this offer and study what is on the table," Olano said before leaving Spain for the world championships in Holland. Manolo Saiz, the ONCE director, said the team was confident that Olano and current star rider Laurent Jalabert would be "perfectly compatible" in the same team.

Hagi turns down offer

BUCHAREST (AFP) — Veteran midfielder Gheorghe Hagi on Wednesday rejected an appeal from the Romanian Football Federation to make himself available for qualifying matches for the 2000 European championships. Hagi, 34, said he would not reverse his decision to retire from international football, which he made after the World Cup finals earlier this year. "I made a serious decision to quit — and I'm not going back on that decision," Hagi said.

Sutton not for sale, Rovers tell Villa

BLACKBURN (AFP) — English Premiership club Blackburn have told rivals Aston Villa to forget about signing striker Chris Sutton. Villa manager John Gregory has made a reported bid of £11 million for Sutton, who cost Blackburn £5 million — then a British record — when he was signed from Norwich in 1994. Blackburn released a statement on Wednesday which read: "Aston Villa manager John Gregory made a telephone inquiry to (Blackburn manager) Roy Hodgson about the availability of Chris Sutton. 'Mr Gregory was told that Chris Sutton was not for sale at any price. There has been no further contact between the clubs or the managers.'"

Pippig suspended after test

DARMSTADT (AFP) — Marathon runner Uta Pippig was Wednesday suspended by the German Athletics Federation (DLV) after returning a positive drugs test, the federation announced Wednesday. The suspension comes into immediate effect. Pippig, a 33-year-old born in Leipzig who now lives in the United States, tested positive during a training session at Boulder, Colorado, on April 23, the federation said. It said laboratory analysis has found a high level of testosterone which had been confirmed by the testing of a second sample. Pippig, a medical student and multiple German record holder, has also competed in road races and in long distance track events. She is a three-time winner of

the Berlin marathon and has also won the Boston marathon three times and the New York marathon.

Former Oriole star dies of cancer

BALTIMORE (AFP) — Former Baltimore Orioles shortstop Mark Belanger died Tuesday after a year-long battle with lung cancer. He was 54. Belanger was a member of the Orioles' World Championship team in 1970 and also played for four American League pennant winners and six division champions. Belanger hit only .228 during an 18-year career. But his .977 fielding percentage ranks eighth on the all-time list for shortstops. Belanger played for the Orioles from 1965-81 before finishing his career the following year with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Gascoigne unimpressive in friendly

DUBLIN (AFP) — England's Paul Gascoigne is not going to earn an international recall by performances such as Middlesbrough's friendly 2-0 victory over Shelbourne here on Tuesday. Gascoigne played the whole match but did not show the type of skill which helped England to semi-finals at the 1990 World Cup and Euro 96 in England.

England injury situation improves

LONDON (AFP) — The injury worries of Glenn Hoddle's England were easing on the run-up to their Euro 2000 clash with Bulgaria at Wembley on Saturday. The seven men who missed training on Monday were reduced to just three on Tuesday as Ian Wright, Ray Parlour and Andy Hinchcliffe sat out the session. Even that trio are only suffering from minor knocks and all three are likely to be in contention to face the eastern Europeans, who were beaten by Poland in their opening qualifying game. "Some had a lighter session than others. But, apart from those three, everyone else trained," said a Football Association spokesman. Victory for Hoddle's men is vital following their 2-1 defeat in Sweden last month. The squad will have a further training session on Wednesday afternoon.

Diniz to join Sauber

HINWIL, Switzerland (AFP) — Brazilian driver Pedro Diniz will switch from the Arrows team to join Sauber for the 1999 Formula One season, the Sauber team announced Wednesday. Diniz, 28, will join experienced Frenchman Jean Alesi on the Sauber team in a move that leaves just two drivers' places unfilled for next year — at Minardi and British American Racing.

UEFA to merge UEFA Cup with Cup Winners Cup

LISBON (AFP) — The executive committee of European football's ruling body UEFA decided here on Tuesday to merge the Cup Winners Cup with the UEFA Cup and enlarge the Champions League to 32 teams from 24 as of the 2000/2001 season.

"After months of discussion we have decided to increase the number of teams in the Champions League from 24 to 32," UEFA President Lennart Johansson said.

The enlargement of the Champions League will mean that the countries who have the best record in European competition could have a maximum of four participants.

However, only 16 clubs will qualify automatically for the Champions League with the other 16 coming through three knockout rounds to form eight groups of four.

The top two in each group will qualify for the next phase of four groups of four but it has not yet been decided whether the competition would then progress directly to the semi-finals or quarter-finals.

Gerhard Aigner, secretary-general of UEFA, confirmed that each club

involved in the Champions League would receive 600-800 million Swiss francs, however he stressed that would only happen if they maintained a united front.

"This will come about only if we sell the television rights as one body because if each individual club deals on its own then the whole thing will fall apart," he said.

Johansson also confirmed that, apart from Champions League changes, the other two club competitions would merge with a slim possibility that both new-look competitions could start next season.

"The Cup Winners Cup will also merge with the UEFA Cup and be called the UEFA Cup and will come into being in the 2000/2001 season unless everything can be put in place by the start of next season which is asking a lot," the Swede said.

UEFA's decision comes after pressure from Europe's leading teams over the last two months to overhaul their club competitions.

Several sides, including English Premiership giants Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool, had

been in discussions with Media Partners International over forming a European Super League.

However, the clubs came under pressure from FIFA, who threatened to suspend any team who signed up for the Super League, although Johansson, who lost out on his bid to become FIFA President in June, hinted that anyone not satisfied with the new format didn't have to participate.

"We are going to give more money to the clubs and we are going to invite the clubs to compete in our competitions but we are not forcing anyone to do so," Johansson added.

The finer details of the competitions' new formats and the contentious financial aspects will be announced at the next executive committee meeting on December 10-11 in Jerusalem.

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Rabbi Motti Levy blows a shofar, or ram's horn, during massive prayers, including the Priestly Blessing, at the Western Wall, background, during celebrations of the week-long holiday of Sukkot in occupied Jerusalem's Old City on Wednesday (AP photo)

Cornerstone laid for Jewish neighbourhood in Hebron

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli militants laid the cornerstone for a new Jewish settlement in Hebron on Wednesday in another snub to U.S. efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

Thousands of Jewish settlers danced and chanted religious songs during the cornerstone-laying ceremony in the Jewish enclave of Tel Rumeida, where the government has agreed to build permanent houses to replace a handful of trailer homes.

Transport Minister Shaul Yahalom, a member of the ultra-nationalist National Religious Party, attended the ceremony and said his movement would battle to ensure construction of a large Jewish neighbourhood at Tel Rumeida.

"It is our duty to build here. It is our duty to expand the building," he said.

The ceremony coincided with a three-way meeting on the Gaza-Israel border between U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to discuss ways to break the 19-month-old deadlock in the peace process.

At a press conference held just as the settlers were laying their cornerstone, Albright announced that Arafat and Netanyahu had agreed to hold a marathon summit in Washington starting October 15 in a bid to reach a new peace accord.

A proposed U.S. peace package to be at the centre of the Washington talks calls for Israel to freeze construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

Netanyahu announced plans to build new homes at Tel Rumeida immediately after meeting Albright a first time in Jerusalem on Tuesday. He defended the decision Wednesday, saying his policy of expanding existing Jewish settlements violated "neither the spirit nor the letter" of the Oslo peace accords.

Netanyahu added fuel to the fire Wednesday with plans to attend a ceremony in the settlement of Ariel marking the official transformation of the community into a "city" and backing plans for new building there.

Albright was clearly displeased with the moves.

"We would hope very much that there would not be any unilateral actions that will complicate the issues that we are trying to deal with here," she said.

Police bars extremist Jews from entering Al Aqsa

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli police prevented Jewish extremists from entering occupied Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque compound Wednesday to launch the reconstruction of the Jewish temple, which extremists claim, stood at the site 2,000 years ago.

Brandishing Israeli flags, about 60 activists from the Mount Temple Faithful group tried to enter the mosque compound to lay a four-and-a-half tonne "cornerstone" for the temple, a police spokesman said.

Police barred the group entry to the compound, the third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. The activists went instead to a square near the Western Wall, a retaining wall for the mosque compound which Jews consider the last remnant of the temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.

Their bid to enter the mosque area, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, coincided with an annual ceremony at the Western Wall called the blessing of the Cohen — descendants of the clan of high priests who officiated at the temple.

About 30,000 people gathered at the wall for the ceremony, held each year during the weeklong festival of tabernacles, Sukkot.

The Temple Mount Faithful are dedicated to rebuilding the ancient temple in the place of Al Aqsa mosque and the adjacent Dome of the Rock.

On Wednesday they left their "cornerstone" for the new temple outside the Old City walls surrounding the disputed compound.

"We will return because there cannot be a state in Greater Israel without the reconstruction of the temple and no one can stop this holy and historic project," said Gershon Salomon, head of the activist group.

Israeli security forces recently stepped up patrols around Al Aqsa for fear of possible attacks by Jewish radicals hoping to scuttle peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.



Chile upholds ban on long hair for male students

SANTIAGO (AFP) — In a throwback to the 1960s, the Chilean Supreme Court has upheld a ban on long hair, tattoos and piercing for male high school students, igniting a heated controversy. "It's like we turned the clock back to the last century," said high school student federation president, Mabel Panalaza, after the court announced its decision Tuesday. The court overturned a decision in July by an appeals court in Valdivia, 740 kilometres south of here, that considered a long-standing ban on flowing hair for male students illegal.

Sexual harassment rampant in Korean workplace

SEOUL (AFP) — Sexual harassment is rampant in South Korea's male-dominated workplace, with 44.3 per cent of women complaining of being groped by male colleagues, a survey showed Wednesday. But men blamed their male sex drive and risked female clothing for inciting such harassment, the Women's Link said in a survey of 1,286 male and female office workers in Seoul. The poll, cited by the Korea Herald newspaper, found that 39.2 per cent of the women admitted having experienced groping during "coerced" slow dancing with male workers at company functions. Another 13.4 per cent said men touched them intentionally, 5.9 per cent said touching was made on the pretext of doing "part of the job," and 2.7 per cent reported being raped. Verbal abuse was more frequent, with some 76.5 per cent saying women had been subjected to constant comments on their body, lewd jokes and cursing. Women are often compared to flowers at work. Constant stares from males proved to be another malaise for female workers.

Chinese girl, locked up by parents for 20 years, dies

BEIJING (AFP) — A Chinese woman who was kept locked in a dark room for 20 years by her parents after she refused to wear clothes has died of pneumonia, a report received here on Wednesday said. The 32-year-old woman died "recently" in her house in Xiajin village, in the impoverished southwestern province of Guizhou. Tuesday's Yangcheng Wanbao daily reported. It said that at age five the unnamed girl complained of itching and refused to put on any clothes. Her parents, afraid of losing face in public, decided three years later to keep her confined to the house in a windowless room. Last year dermatologists attempted to gain access to the woman after hearing rumours of her plight, but her parents refused to let them in, the report said.

Man thought sexual pact with his stepdaughter was OK

DALLAS (AP) — A Nigerian immigrant was convicted Wednesday of sexual abuse after he admitted fathering a baby with his 16-year-old stepdaughter, saying he signed a contract with the girl's mother before they married providing for the girl to bear a child with him. Chris Ahametile Ibeduru, 45, testified Tuesday that it's not illegal in his native country to have sex with a juvenile and that he didn't know it was illegal in the United States. Jurors Wednesday took only 15 minutes to convict Ibeduru of sexual assault on a child. He could receive from two to 20 years in prison, and also could be deported.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Saddam to undergo chemotherapy'

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein will shortly undergo intensive chemotherapy for a tumour in his intestinal tract, a Kuwaiti newspaper said Wednesday. Al Rai Al Aam, quoting "high-level sources," said a team of French doctors visited Baghdad in August. They diagnosed the 61-year-old president, whose forces occupied Kuwait from August 1990-February 1991, as suffering from the tumour and recommended he undergo a six-month programme of intensive chemotherapy. If the tumour is not treated, it could turn into cancer of the spinal chord, the paper said, adding that such treatment often caused the patient to turn aggressive.

Radio Free Iraq gets green light

PRAGUE (AP) — The Czech government allowed Radio Free Europe broadcasts into Iraq on Wednesday, but insisted the station's location should change to avoid security risks. Earlier this year, the U.S. government-funded radio station, which operates out of Prague, announced plans to expand its broadcasts into Iraq and Iraq. The move met with concerns by the Czech cabinet, which protested the station's location in a densely populated residential area in northern Prague. "The government agrees with the RFE broadcasts (into Iraq) on condition that due to security risks involved the station's location be reviewed with the respective Czech authorities," Vice Premier Vladimir Spidla said Wednesday.

2 Egyptian MPs to undergo investigations

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian parliamentary ethics committees ordered investigations Wednesday into an MP who refused to pay his hotel phone bill and another who allegedly spent money on a bellydancer while on duty. The ethics committee of the lower house ordered an investigation into the ruling party's Mohammad Awad Ebeid for refusing to pay his \$300 hotel phone bill, a parliamentary source said. Meanwhile the ethics committee of the upper house will investigate an accusation that MP Khalifa Hassanein visited a nightclub while on duty and spent money on a bellydancer, he said. The incident reportedly happened in September when Hassanein accompanied an official delegation to the Red Sea resort of Hurgada on business. While there he allegedly went to a hotel nightclub where a bellydancer was performing and, like other guests, threw bills at the dancer to show his appreciation for her performance.

Pakistan army chief resigns

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistani army chief Jehangir Karamat resigned Wednesday amid a rift with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after calling for the formation of a National Security Council (NSC), official sources said. In his resignation letter, Karamat said his proposed NSC and implied criticism of government policies had sparked an unnecessary controversy. He said he considered it appropriate to quit in the larger interest of the country and to set a healthy tradition for the future, state television quoted Karamat as saying.

U.S. embassy in Cairo evacuated in bomb alert

CAIRO (AFP) — The U.S. embassy in Cairo evacuated its personnel after a false bomb alert, police said Wednesday. The embassy received an anonymous phone call Tuesday evening saying a bomb had been planted in the building. Staffers were cleared out but a search of the compound revealed it was only a false alarm, they said. The embassy is located in Garden City, a residential neighbourhood in the centre of Cairo.

Iran names first female diplomat

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has named its first female diplomat since the 1979 Islamic revolution, a newspaper reported Wednesday. Fatemeh Hashemi, the head of women's affairs at the foreign ministry, told Iran News that the unidentified woman has been cleared for a post at Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York and is waiting for a vacancy. She also said the foreign ministry had agreed for the first time since the revolution to name a woman ambassador to an unspecified country, but that the appointee had herself refused to take the job.

Algerian rebels booby-trap baby's corpse — report

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian Islamists slit the throats of a family of seven and booby-trapped the corpse of a seven-month-old baby which exploded in the arms of a government soldier, a local newspaper reported on Wednesday.

The booby-trapped baby exploded in the arms of a government soldier who was wounded as he was carrying the corpse to a waiting vehicle," the Arabic-language Sawt Al Aharr daily reported. It said that Muslim activists had murdered the infant, his

parents and four sisters and brothers in the attack on Monday night at Tizi in the western province of Mascara, 300 kilometres from Algiers.

In another attack, security forces said that on Wednesday the rebels slit the throats of seven civilians and wounded five others in south-west Algeria.

"Seven people were assassinated in a cowardly way and five others wounded by a group of terrorists," the security forces said, using official terms to describe Muslim activists when they cut the

throats of their victims.

"The security forces immediately began an intensive operation to track the perpetrators of this criminal act," the forces said in a statement carried by the official APS news agency.

Wednesday's attack was the latest in a long line of atrocities during nearly seven years of struggle between government troops and the activists in which tens of thousands have been killed.

Algeria plunged into violence in early 1992 after the authorities cancelled a gener-

al election in which radical Islamists had taken a commanding lead.

Mascara is among several provinces where Algerian troops, backed by artillery and helicopters, are attacking rebels who have taken refuge from the northern parts of the North African nation.

La Nouvelle Republique, another daily supporting the military, said on Tuesday that more than 100 rebels had been killed in the past few days in Mascara alone.

Algerian media have reported that scores of rebels have

been killed in the offensive in Tlemcen and Sidi Bel Abbas provinces and in neighbouring mountainous areas in Saida and Ain Defla, to the southwest.

Al Aci newspaper said on Wednesday that troops had killed 15 rebels in the southwestern province of Saida, where some 50 members of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Algeria's most radical guerrilla faction, have been under siege since last week.

Le Matin daily said troops killed 83 rebels in Ain Defla last week.

Pro-Syria minister to boycott Lahoud's election as president

BEIRUT (AP) — A cabinet minister and a close Syria ally on Wednesday criticised the Syrian-backed choice of the army commander as president, and said he will boycott a vote to elect the military man for the executive post.

Walid Jumblatt, the minister for displaced persons, said he and his party's three legislators will not vote when the 128-member parliament elects the president, likely sometime before Oct. 23.

Although a boycott by

Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party will hardly spoil the chances of General Emile Lahoud, it could embolden others to express discontent at the choice and the process of his election.

Lahoud is virtually assured of the job: the prime minister and the parliament speaker first approved Lahoud, who then won the all-important backing of Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon.

"Historically, we do not approve that a military man

takes control of the country," Jumblatt told reporters after a meeting with outgoing President Elias Hrawi.

Although opposition to Syria's hold on Lebanon's politics is common among anti-Syrian politicians, it is rare for somebody like Jumblatt to openly speak against a decision personally cleared by Syrian President Hafez Assad who keeps 30,000 troops in Lebanon.

Like Jumblatt, some in Lebanon fear that a military

man as president could mean intelligence agents will track civilian life just as they did between 1958 and 1964 during the presidency of Fouad Chehab, the only other army commander to become head of state.

In nominating Lahoud, "rules were not respected," Jumblatt said. "Things were supposed to run in a more democratic way," said Jumblatt, whose Druse militia fought Christian forces during the 1975-90 civil war. The new president must be

sworn in on Nov. 24, the day Hrawi leaves office after a six-year term.

Jumblatt said "there is adequate political diversity and competition in the country," implying that choosing a military man for president was unnecessary.

Deputy Prime Minister Michel Murr sought to calm fears about military intrusion. He told reporters that Lahoud will "keep the army out of politics just as he kept politics out of the army."

U.N. envoy declines trip to Kabul

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The Taliban religious militia is demanding United Nations recognition, but on Wednesday it still was uncertain whether the hard-line Islamic army would send a representative to meet the U.N.'s special envoy.

Lakhdar Brahimi, who is currently in Iran before coming to Pakistan on Thursday, turned down a Taliban invitation to visit Kabul citing security reasons, says James Ngobi, a senior U.N. official in Pakistan.

The United Nations pulled all its international staff out of Afghanistan on Aug. 21, the day after U.S. missiles slammed into suspected activists training camps in eastern Afghanistan.

In apparent retaliation for the missile assault, Afghan gunmen shot and killed an expatriate U.N. worker in the capital of Kabul on Aug. 21 and wounded a second worker.

"I can confirm that he was invited to go to Kabul, but he has informed the Taliban that unfortunately he cannot for security reasons," Ngobi told the Associated Press in an interview. "There is a standing directive from the U.N. headquarters for all U.N. international personnel not to go to Afghanistan." Instead Brahimi invited the Taliban

to Pakistan. Ngobi said so far the Taliban haven't replied.

However, Mullah Mohammad Omar, the reclusive Taliban leader has been issuing almost daily statements from his headquarters in southern Kandahar, slamming the U.N., demanding recognition for his movement and warning Iran against a military confrontation with Afghanistan.

Brahimi's first order of business is to soothe tempers between Iran and Afghanistan, says Ngobi.

Iran has amassed an estimated 270,000 troops on its eastern borders with Afghanistan and is to hold a major military exercise later this month.

Tensions between the two countries have increased since Taliban troops killed eight Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist in northern Afghanistan in August.

Iran wants an apology from the Taliban and the culprits handed over for trial in Tehran. Omar has refused both demands calling the diplomats "conspirators" and accusing Iran of arming and financing its northern-based opposition.

In recent days Omar has criticised the U.N. for recognising the former government of Burhanuddin Rabbani, which barely controls 10 per

cent of the country, while the Taliban rule the remaining 90 per cent.

As well Omar has offered to totally eradicate poppy cultivation from Afghanistan if his Taliban army is given official recognition.

Afghanistan is considered one of the world's biggest opium producers, which is derived from poppies and used to make heroin. Most of the poppies are grown in Taliban-ruled areas.

But thus far the U.N. has refused, in part say some U.N. officials, who don't want to be quoted, because of pressure from the United States.

Ngobi said Brahimi will meet with senior Pakistani officials during his one-week visit. Pakistan is believed to be one of the major backers of the Taliban army, while Iran and Russia are considered big supporters of the anti-Taliban alliance.

Should a Taliban representative be sent to Pakistan, Brahimi will discuss the U.N.'s security concerns and conditions under which the U.N. will return to Afghanistan, he said.

Ngobi refused to say what Brahimi hoped to achieve while in Pakistan.

"I think that's better asked of him at the end of his visit," he said.

Taliban offers to stem heroin

KABUL (AFP) —

Afghanistan's Taliban leader said Wednesday the movement would "seriously prevent" opium cultivation in return for the recognition of its government by the United Nations.

Taliban Supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar told the militia's official Bakhtar news agency that authorities were ready to act "since the current season is the time for poppy sowing."

"If the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is unconditionally recognised by the U.N., the IEA will also seriously prevent the poppy cultivation unconditionally throughout the country."

"If the IEA is not recognised by the United Nations, there is no doubt the [Afghan] government and the people will face economic problems," he said, referring to impoverished



In this file photo dated April 30, a labourer scrapes the head of an opium poppy to extract opium paste in Taliban-controlled eastern Afghanistan during the annual and bumper harvest of the potent narcotic (AFP photo)

poppy producing farmers.

The U.N. Drug Control Program (UNDCP) has estimated that 80 per cent of heroin seized in Europe originates from Afghanistan, with Helmand and Nangahar provinces in the south and south east providing about 75 per cent of total output.